

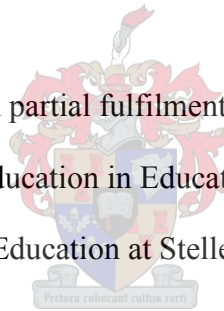
Life Orientation Teachers' Experience of Context in the Implementation of the Curriculum

by

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for the degree of Master of Education in Educational Psychology (MEdPsych)
in the Faculty of Education at Stellenbosch University



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F gego dgt '2014

DECLARATION

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the sole author thereof (save to the extent explicitly otherwise stated), that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third party rights and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

Signed: J Wasserman

Date: 17 November 2014

DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to the youth of South Africa, and to your educators who are guiding and teaching you each and every day so that you can become the future leaders and pioneers of our country.

Let's equip ourselves and our youth so that we may be armed with the most powerful weapon of all: **knowledge**.

*“What nobler employment, or more valuable to the state, than the man who instructs
the rising generation.”*

~Marcus Tullius Cicero

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This journey would not have been possible without the unconditional love and support of the many important role players in my life:

- My supervisor, Mrs Louw: Thank you for picking up the pieces and walking this path with me. Thank you for your patience and encouragement, and your invaluable input.
- My family: Thank you for always being there – I love you with all of me.
- My mom: Thank you for being my teacher – for showing me that nothing is impossible.
- Lindy: My light, my pillar, my strength, my love.
- My friends: Thank you for your support and understanding through some very long periods of introversion and hibernation.
- M: My mentor and guardian angel. Thank you for your unrelenting support and guidance.
- The schools: Thank you for welcoming me with open arms, and for your interest and participation in this study.
- The participants: Thank you for sharing your experiences with me, and for giving of yourselves and your time. This is for you.

ABSTRACT

Since 1994, and the dissolution of the apartheid era, South African curricula have seen many revisions and adaptations to subject statements, learning programmes, and assessment guidelines. The most recent occurred in 2009, when the previously revised curricula statements (RNCS, 2005) were to be replaced with the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) for all approved subjects listed (including the subject of Life Orientation), taking effect in January 2012. These revisions have influenced curriculum implementation across contexts throughout the country – contexts that vary in culture, politics, and socio-economic status due to the inequalities of the past. It is these varied contexts, and the implementation of the current CAPS curriculum therein, that led to the formulation of this research study. The implementation of the subject of Life Orientation was of particular interest to the researcher as it is this subject that has been designed, throughout the many curricular revisions, to prepare learners for life and work in the outside world (i.e. in their specific contexts external to the primary education system).

This research study attempts to explore the experiences of Life Orientation teachers, focusing specifically on the role that context plays in their implementation of the curriculum. Teachers working in the FET phase (grades 10-12), within two different contexts, were selected to participate.

Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) was used as the theoretical framework for this study because of the overlapping and interrelated systems that influence the development of the child and the context in which learning takes place. This is informed by Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism, which emphasises the social aspect of development and the influence that specific social contexts have on learning.

For this research, the learners were placed in the centre of Bronfenbrenner's model; while the school, family, and broader social community were placed in the outer systems.

This study made use of a basic qualitative design and a qualitative methodology which is rooted within an interpretive paradigm. Purposeful sampling was used to select participants from the two respective school contexts in the Western Cape province, and three measures were used to collect data: (1) a self-administered questionnaire, which teachers were asked to complete in their own time; (2) semi-structured individual interviews with the principals and heads of Life Orientation from the two respective schools; and (3) focus group interviews

with the teachers in their respective contexts. Qualitative content and thematic analysis was used to analyse the data generated by means of these three data collection methods.

The findings of this research paper suggest that the delivery of the current Life Orientation curriculum within particular contexts was a challenging experience for the teachers who participated in the study. However, with appropriate and professional teacher training and/or a more flexible and adaptable curriculum design, the participants felt that these challenges could be overcome.

While the findings of the study cannot be generalised to all schools in South Africa, recommendations can be made, based on this study, for the relevant schools as well as the Department of Education to assist in ensuring that appropriate measures are taken in order to improve curriculum implementation – whether through professional teacher training and development, curriculum design, or both.

Key Words: Life Orientation, FET phase, context, curriculum implementation, professional teacher training, curriculum design, CAPS.

OPSOMMING

Sedert 1994, en die ontbinding van die apartheids-era, was daar verskeie wysigings en weergawes van die Suid-Afrikaanse kurrikulum ten opsigte van beleidsverklarings, leerprogramme en assesseringsriglyne. Die mees onlangse wysiging het in 2009 plaasgevind, toe die voorheen Hersiene Nasionale Kurrikulum Beleidsverklaring (HNKV, 2005) vervang is met die Kurrikulum en Assesseringsbeleidsverklaring (KABV) vir alle goedgekeurde vakke (insluitende die vak Lewensoriëntering) – wat in Januarie 2012 in werking getree het. Hierdie wysigings het die implementering van die kurrikulum oor kontekste heen dwarsdeur die land beïnvloed – kontekste wat wissel in kultuur, politiek en sosio-ekonomiese status as gevolg van die ongelykhede van die verlede. Dit is die implementering van die huidige KAVB kurrikulum binne hierdie verskillende kontekste wat gelei het tot die formulering van hierdie navorsingstudie. Die implementering van die vak Lewensoriëntering was van besondere belang vir die navorser, aangesien dit hierdie vak is wat ontwerp is deur al die kurrikulumhersienings heen om leerders vir die lewe en in die wêreld daarbuite voor te berei (in hul spesifieke konteks).

Hierdie navorsingstudie poog om die ervarings van Lewensoriëntering-onderwysers te verken, met spesifieke fokus op die rol wat konteks speel in hul implementering van die kurrikulum. Onderwysers wat werk in die VOO (Verdere Onderwys en Opleiding)-fase (grade 10-12) binne twee verskillende kontekste is gekies om deel te neem aan hierdie studie.

Bronfenbrenner se bio-ekologiese model (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) is gebruik as die teoretiese raamwerk vir hierdie studie weens die oorvleueling van en onderlinge verhoudings tussen sisteme wat die ontwikkeling van die kind en die konteks waarin leer plaasvind, beïnvloed. Dit word toegelig deur Vygotsky se teorie van sosiale konstruktivisme, wat die sosiale aspek van ontwikkeling en die invloed wat spesifieke sosiale kontekste op leer het, beklemtoon. Vir hierdie navorsingstudie is die leerders in die middel van Bronfenbrenner se model geplaas; terwyl die skool, gesin en die breër sosiale gemeenskap in die perifêre sisteme geplaas is.

Hierdie studie het gebruik gemaak van 'n basiese kwalitatiewe ontwerp en 'n kwalitatiewe metode wat gewortel is in 'n interpretatiewe paradigma. Doelbewuste steekproefneming is gebruik om deelnemers uit die twee onderskeie skoolkontekste in die Wes-Kaap te kies. Die studie het gebruik gemaak van drie metodes om data in te samel: (1) 'n self-gedadministreerde vraelys wat die onderwysers gevra is om te voltooi in hul eie tyd; (2) semi-gestruktureerde individuele onderhoude met die skoolhoofde en hoofde van

Lewensoriëntering uit die twee onderskeie skole; en (3) fokusgroeponderhoude met die onderwysers uit die onderskeie kontekste. Kwalitatiewe inhouds- en tematiese analise is gebruik om die data wat gegenereer is deur middel van hierdie drie data-insamelingsmetodes te ontleed.

Die bevindinge van hierdie navorsingstudie het aan die lig gebring dat die lewering van die huidige Lewensoriëntering kurrikulum binne hulle bepaalde kontekste 'n uitdagende ervaring vir die onderwysers was wat aan die studie deelgeneem het. Die deelnemers was egter van mening dat hierdie uitdagings oorkom kan word met toepaslike en professionele opleiding van onderwysers, en/of 'n meer buigsame en aanpasbare kurrikulumontwerp.

Hoewel die bevindinge van hierdie studie nie veralgemeen kan word tot alle skole in Suid-Afrika nie, kan aanbevelings tog gemaak word aan die betrokke skole, sowel as die Departement van Onderwys om te help verseker dat die nodige maatreëls in plek gesit word om implementering van die kurrikulum te verbeter— hetsy deur professionele opleiding en ontwikkeling van onderwysers, of deur kurrikulumontwerp, of albei.

Sleutelwoorde: Lewensoriëntering, VOO-fase, konteks, kurrikulum implementering, professionele onderwyseropleiding, kurrikulumontwerp, KAVB

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CHAPTER ONE

CONTEXTUALISATION, BACKGROUND AND RELEVANCE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In 1997, outcomes-based education (OBE), in the form of Curriculum 2005 (C2005), was introduced to South Africa's post-apartheid education system in an attempt to overcome the curricular divisions of the past. Although all curricula are political in the sense that they embody the educational vision of a particular government, C2005 carried an unusually overt political agenda (Bertram, 2008). Morrow (2005 as cited in Bertram, 2008) describes OBE as the 'New Scripture', the path that was chosen to move South African education away from all that was considered negative about apartheid education. Its purpose was clearly to break down the divisions that had existed between academic and applied knowledge, between theory and practice, and between knowledge and skills. In addition, its purpose was to foster tolerant citizens who would embrace the values of reconciliation and nation building (DoE, 1997 as cited in Bertram, 2008). However, despite all efforts made by teachers to embrace C2005 as a political project which was different from apartheid education, after only three years of implementation a review of C2005 was prompted by the Ministry of Education, as a result of teachers' uneven pedagogical responses (Bertram, 2008). A range of criticism resulted, which focused on two key areas: problems with implementing the curriculum, and problems with the structure of the curriculum itself (Bertram, 2008). This led to the first curriculum revision in the form of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) Grades R-9 and the National Curriculum Statement Grades 10-12 (Department of Education [DoE], 2002a). With this came the introduction of the learning area known as Life Orientation (LO), which intended to focus specifically on the human rights and future of South Africa's new diverse generation of learners. As stated in the NCS of 2002, the purpose of LO is to, "equip learners with the skills, knowledge, attitudes and values to face life's challenges in an informed, confident and responsible way" (DoE, 1997 as cited in Van Deventer, 2009:128).

After further investigation into curriculum implementation, the National Curriculum Statement of 2002 and the Revised National Curriculum Statement of 2005, were revised once again in 2009, with the subject statements, learning programme guidelines, and subject assessment guidelines of the revised curriculum statements being replaced with the

Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) for all approved subjects listed – taking effect in January 2012. The new curriculum subdivides the grades into phases: foundation phase (grades R-3), intermediate phase (grades 4-6), senior/general education (GET) phase (grades 7-9), and further education and training (FET) phase (grades 10-12) (Department of Basic Education [DoBE], 2011b). According to the Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga, “this document builds on the previous curriculum, but also updates it and aims to provide clearer specification of what is to be taught and learnt on a term-by-term basis” (DoBE, 2011b, [foreword]). In each phase, the teaching and learning of the subject known as Life Skills or Life Orientation is compulsory – it is one of the four fundamental subjects required for the National Senior Certificate.

Despite ongoing curricular revision, the aim and purpose of Life Orientation has not changed, and maintains a consistent emphasis on developing skilled and knowledgeable learners who are able to problem-solve and make informed choices in a society that is constantly evolving and changing with the rapid pace of technology. It is a subject that is intended to develop the learner holistically – on a personal, social, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual level – ultimately leading to, “the development of a balanced and confident learner who can contribute to a just and democratic society, a productive economy and an improved quality of life for all” (DoBE, 2011b:8).

However, much debate has taken place over the past decade with regards to curriculum development and implementation in South Africa. According to a report released in 2000 by the Commonwealth of Learning, the purpose of a curriculum is based on the social aspirations of society and thus the curriculum content must contribute to solving the problems affecting the society which uses it (Chikumbu & Makamure, 2000). Despite efforts to overcome the inequalities of the past, South Africa remains a diverse society, with diverse cultures and diverse needs – perhaps providing an explanation for almost two decades of failed curricular development and implementation in our country. Culture and socio-economic status, i.e. the local context in which individuals find themselves, may thus be directly related to this phenomenon.

This qualitative study will attempt to explore Life Orientation teachers’ experiences in their implementation of the curriculum within two culturally and socio-economically diverse contexts in the Western Cape. This chapter will firstly provide the reader with the objectives,

background, and motivation of the research. Secondly, it will outline the theoretical framework and state the research problem and research questions. It also includes an introductory description of the research plan, data analysis, and ethical considerations that underpin and guide this research. Lastly, relevant concepts are clarified and a synopsis of the remainder of the thesis' chapters will be provided.

1.2 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The American Psychological Association's (APA) Dictionary of Psychology (American Psychological Association, 2007) defines socio-economic status (SES) as the position of an individual or group on the socio-economic scale, which is informed by a combination or interaction of social and economic factors such as income, amount and type of education, prestige and occupation, place of residence and, in some societies, even ethnic origin and religious background. This definition is valuable in the South African context as it is these factors that separate high socio-economic status groups from low socio-economic status groups (Maswikiti, 2008). Students and their families are generally classified into high-, middle-, and low-SES based on a standardised composite index score of their parents' education level, occupation, income, wealth, and collection of household items that hold value. The terms "high SES", "middle SES", and "low SES" respectively refer to the upper, middle two, and lower quartiles of the composite index score distribution (Yetman, 2001:1).

South Africa's history has ensured that socio-economic status is distributed along racial lines. The hierarchical structure of society, including access to wealth, prestige, and power, was constructed to be on the basis of race through decades and even centuries of institutionalised inequality (Taylor & Yu, 2009). Socio-economic status and race are therefore intrinsically connected, ultimately impacting on culture and context and their role in curriculum development and implementation.

The curriculum is a social construct and diverse societies do not hold universal views, thus, "curriculum development models appropriate for one situation may be impractical in another" (Otunga & Nyandusi, 2010:1). It is therefore important to consider context when developing a curriculum. Here, context is concerned with the environment in which the curriculum is developed. In other words, "context is the summation of the factors that influence the curriculum development process" (Otunga & Nyandusi, 2010:2), such as

political, economic, cultural and technological factors. These are not all the factors; just those deemed to be most salient in characterising the South African curriculum context.

Recently, two trends, which appear to be polar opposites, have had an influence on the curriculum development process, namely globalization, or internationalization, of the curriculum; and localization of the curriculum (Van Crowder, 1997). Localisation refers to, “the transfer, adaptation, and development of related values, knowledge, technology, and behavioural norms from/to the local contexts” (Cheng, 2001:8). It acknowledges the local context within which the learners live and interact, and knowledge and skills are adapted and transferred accordingly. It also acknowledges that one size does not fit all, providing greater flexibility to allow learning to become more meaningful and relevant (International Bureau of Education, [IBE] n.d.). In order to ensure that this adaptation and transfer is carried out effectively, teachers need to, “understand the experiences and perspectives [that their learners] bring to educational settings and be responsive to the cultures of different groups in designing curriculum, learning activities, classroom climates, instructional materials and techniques, and assessment procedures” (Kirkland, 2003:134, as cited in Oran, 2009). Content relevance is crucial in developing quality curricula and, thus, the promotion of localised curricula is a way of encouraging such relevance in very different local, cultural and socio-economic contexts (IBE, n.d.).

Culture has been defined as, “the system of values, beliefs, and ways of knowing that guide communities of people in their daily lives” (Trumbull, 2005:35, as cited in Oran, 2009). Effective teacher preparation addresses the need for teachers to acknowledge students’ diversity and incorporate their pluralistic backgrounds and experiences into the learning experiences and classroom environment (Oran, 2009). This is referred to as ‘cultural competence’ in the literature and means, “using curriculum that is respectful of and relevant to the cultures represented in its student body” (Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction [OSPI], 2013). According to Gay (2000:43-44, as cited in Oran, 2009), “Culturally responsive teachers ... validate, facilitate, liberate and empower ethnically diverse students by simultaneously cultivating their cultural integrity, individual abilities, and academic success”. The main focus in teaching has switched from the “what” – that is, content in the curriculum, to the “who” – who is the learner in the classroom (Oran, 2009). Culturally competent teachers assure that the curriculum will be taught, that it will be delivered in a way that is responsive to the collective norms and experiences of the student population, and that

the relationships forged between teacher and student will be built on respect and sincerity – a relationship through which a teacher will ensure that their students will not only learn the coursework, but also grow as individuals (Miller, 2010). Cultural competence and curriculum localisation are thus intertwined, as a culturally competent teacher requires an appropriately localised curriculum from which to teach.

The impact of technology on curriculum development is what Cheng (2001; 2004) refers to as globalisation: “the transfer, adaptation, and development of values, knowledge, technology and behavioural norms across countries and societies in different parts of the world” (Cheng, 2001:8). New generations are expected to be more self-learning, creative, and adaptive to the changing environment, with multiple intelligence and a global outlook (Cheng, 2001). Curriculum change is dictated by changes in economic, social and technological aspects of a society (Chikumbu & Makamure, 2000). “The external context surrounding a school interacts in important ways with the instruction and learning occurring inside” (Siegel-Hawley & Frankenberg, 2012:7). Thus, it is important that, while remaining culturally competent, educators are able to take into account global technological advancements and incorporate these into the teaching of Life Skills. The curriculum is not a fixed product but a dynamic process – it is an ongoing process that responds to changes in society and to changes in the educational institution itself (Van Crowder, 1997). South African learners face the complex challenge of living in an increasingly demanding and rapidly changing world.

Learners have a range of needs and Life Orientation has the potential to respond to many of these from a preventative, promotive, and ameliorative perspective (Rooth, 2005). In addition, while Erikson and Piaget (1962, 1970, 1972) focus on the individual child’s progress through biologically and psychologically determined learning stages, Vygotsky (1978) calls attention to the ways in which social environments influence this learning process (Darling-Hammond, Austin, Orcutt & Martin, 2003.) According to a study by Darling-Hammond and Snyder (2000:524), “all teaching and all learning is shaped by the contexts in which they occur”. These contexts are defined by the nature of the subject matter, the goals of instruction, the individual proclivities and understandings of learners and teachers, and the settings within which teaching and learning take place. Thus context cannot be ignored when investigating teachers’ experiences of implementing the Life Orientation subject, as it is Vygotsky’s belief that, “learning and development take place in the

interactions children have with peers as well as with teachers and other adults” (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2003:126), ultimately shaping their understanding of the world.

Ultimately, the goal of education is to facilitate the development of intelligent, life-long learners who possess the strategies and metacognitive processes to make meaningful connections with their knowledge basis and transfer their skills to (and beyond) the challenges they encounter in their daily life (Oran, 2009). This is echoed in the outcomes of the Life Orientation subject area. Today’s youth have to make informed decisions, particularly about their, “health and well-being, lifestyles, relationships and careers” (Rooth, 2005:10). However, a study conducted by Samuels (2012:11) found that, “many Life Skills Education (LSE) curricula have been criticized for being applied as a form of blueprint in different parts of the world without taking into account that young people are not a homogenous category, that needs and priorities ... will vary by age, gender and context”. In addition, she found that teachers may often not be appropriately or sufficiently trained to deliver LSE: “They may lack the capacity, support and confidence to teach” (Samuels, 2012:10). It is these two factors of curriculum development and implementation, and teacher training that play a critical role in curriculum revision time and time again, and have contributed to the development of this research paper.

1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM AND AIMS

International debate has raged about what subject matter and content best meets the needs of society; i.e. what the education system should concentrate on (Cheng, 2004). Society has its own expectations about the aims and objectives that should be considered when designing the curriculum. It also has a perception of what the product of the school system should look like. It is therefore necessary for curriculum designers to take into account these societal considerations. If this does not happen, the curriculum becomes irrelevant (Chikumbu & Makamure, 2000).

The primary aim of this research paper is therefore to explore Life Orientation teachers’ experiences of context in the implementation of the current curriculum (CAPS). In *The Curriculum*, Bobbitt (as cited in Smith, 1996; 2000) writes as follows:

The central theory [of curriculum] is simple. Human life, however varied, consists in the performance of specific activities. Education that prepares for life is one that prepares definitely and adequately for these specific activities.

Life Skills education, or Life Orientation, has been designed with this intention: to prepare learners for life. One does, however, have to question whether it has taken into account the varied contexts within which individuals live, and whether adequate preparation is being provided by teachers for the activities (both life and work) that take place within these diverse socio-economic and cultural settings.

This research paper is thus guided by the following research question:

What are Life Orientation teachers' experiences of context in the implementation of the curriculum?

Several sub-questions are also included in the study:

- 1 What are Life Orientation (LO) teachers' perceptions with regards to the context of their learners?
- 2 What are Life Orientation teachers' personal experiences with regards to the implementation of the LO curriculum in their specific contexts?
- 3 What are LO teachers' opinions with regards to the implementation of the Life Orientation CAPS curriculum in their specific contexts?
- 4 How do Life Orientation teachers perceive their roles in the teaching of the curriculum in the unique contexts of their learners?
- 5 How do the experiences and opinions of LO teachers compare in different contexts?

These questions will be investigated using an interpretive framework, wherein the researcher will be guided by the epistemological, methodological, and ontological underpinnings of this paradigm in order to explore Life Orientation teachers' experiences of context in implementing the curriculum. In addition, Urie Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory (2005), informed by Vygotsky and social constructivism, serves as the theoretical grounding for this study. The paradigmatic and theoretical framework will be discussed in more detail in sections 1.4 and 3.2 of this study.

1.4 RESEARCH PARADIGM

The paradigm directs the study and guides the researcher's approach in order to better answer the research questions. "It is the broad theoretical orientation to which a particular research study belongs" (Eloff & Ebersöhn, 2004:355).

Interpretivism is one such orientation, which places emphasis on understanding individual interpretations of the world (Perry, 2010). It includes "acknowledging that people's subjective experiences (their realities) are valid, multiple and socially constructed, and should be taken seriously" (Eloff & Ebersöhn, 2004:356). Thus, for the purpose of this study, interpretivism provides a framework for understanding Life Orientation teachers' experience of context in their implementation of the curriculum.

1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design of a study can be described as, "a strategic framework for action that serves as a bridge between research questions and the execution or implementation of the research" (Strydom, 2011:69). The purpose of a research study is reflected in the types of conclusions the researcher aims to draw or the goals of the research (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). The research design for this study was selected according to the research questions that were asked in section 1.3. Durrheim (2006) identifies four principles which contribute towards design coherence and assist in answering the research questions. These include the purpose of the research, the context in which it takes place, the research paradigm, and the techniques used.

The formulation of a design is informed by first categorising the types of research into three different groups and then selecting the most appropriate based on its relevance to the research study. The three different categories are described in section 3.3, and are (1) exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory research; (2) applied and basic research; and (3) quantitative and qualitative research. The selection of the most appropriate type within each category ultimately informed the research methodology to be used for this particular research study, which is a basic descriptive qualitative study. A qualitative design is suited to explore experiences and opinions and was therefore selected as it allows participants the freedom to express the uniqueness of their own experience (Britten, 2005). For this research, a qualitative methodology was thus the most appropriate.

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research methodologies refer to processes whereby the researcher attempts to understand how research participants make meaning of their environment, through observation and interaction with them. Through this the researcher tries to gain greater insight into the processes at play, and how social and cultural influences affect the patterns that have been observed and identified (Maree, 2007). The researcher therefore attempts to change the unknown into the known by gaining insight into these meaning-making processes.

It is important to draw a distinction between research paradigm, research design, research methodology, and research tools. ‘Paradigm’, as discussed in section 1.4, refers to the theoretical assumptions that guide the research process as a whole. ‘Design’ refers to the plan of how the research is to be completed; it is the, “strategic framework for action in the implementation of the research” (Perry, 2010:39). ‘Methodology’ refers to the particular procedures used by the researcher to gather the data – “it is the ‘bridging’ process that brings theory and method, perspective and tool, together”. And lastly, ‘research tools’ are the specific data-gathering instruments that are used in a study. This section serves as a brief overview of the research methodology used in this study (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006:37). A more comprehensive discussion will follow in chapter 3.

The strategy which was employed within this research can be classified as basic or generic qualitative research. Merriam (1998:11) identifies the main purpose of such studies as being to, “seek to discover and understand a phenomenon, a process, or the perspectives and worldviews of the people involved”. Furthermore, the basic qualitative study demonstrates all the qualities of typical qualitative research (discussed in chapter 3), and is focused on understanding situations and contexts. This strategy was thus deemed most appropriate by the researcher for this particular study, as the objectives are to gain a deeper understanding of Life Orientation teachers’ experiences of their school contexts.

1.6.1 Context of the Study

This study was conducted at both a private, and a public school institution, within the Western Cape Province of South Africa. The definitions of these two institutions are

discussed in section 1.8. The school in context A was selected as it is a public school institution and, more specifically, a school of skills, located in a low socio-economic environment, and caters for learners who are financially, as well as intellectually disadvantaged¹, who generally come from unstable home environments. According to Dr. Ferreira (2012), a school of skills in the Western Cape Education Department targets learners with a lower cognitive function ability, aged 15 to 19 years old and, in addition to a specialised skill, learners are required to complete the fundamental academic component over their four year enrolment, including Life Skills (or Life Orientation), which forms a large part of the academic curriculum. The school in context B was selected as it is a private school institution located in a middle to high socio economic area, catering for learners who come from more stable home environments, and who are more financially advantaged. As discussed in section 1.2., socio-economic status (SES), as well as culture, are major contributing factors in defining ‘context’, and thus this distinction was important for the purposes of this study. All the research data was gathered in a private office on the school premises.

1.6.2 Selection of Participants and Selection Criteria

Relevance of curriculum content with regards to context is a crucial dimension of quality education (International Bureau of Education, n.d.) and is therefore applicable across all subject areas in the South African school curriculum. However, due to the limited scale of this study, Life Orientation was selected as the primary focus of the research study, as it is a subject that has been designed with the intention of providing learners with the skills, knowledge, and values that will allow for optimal development and life-long learning, and of producing citizens who are able to contribute to their communities and the context within which they find themselves. In addition, though it is also expected that these skills will be introduced to learners in the foundation phase and developed throughout their schooling career, for the purposes of this research study only teachers of Life Orientation to high school

¹ Despite cognitive impairments, a school of skills is still applicable to this research study as Life Orientation requires more critical thinking and lateral thinking than academic ability. Thus, a comparison can still be drawn between teachers’ experiences of the LO curriculum across these two contexts.

learners, aged fifteen to eighteen (FET phase²), will be referred to, as these learners are steadily approaching the world of work and life outside of school, and are in what Erikson (1950; 1959; 1968 as cited in McLeod, 2008) originally described as the stage of identity formation – where these individuals consolidate earlier roles, identifications, skills, values, beliefs and talents, both consciously and unconsciously, in order to successfully prepare for the social roles, relationships, and responsibilities of adulthood. In her research study, Rooth (2005) found that South African adolescents in particular are demonstrating increased rates of drug and alcohol experimentation, sexual activity, delinquency, suicide attempts, anti-social activities, physical aggression, and fighting. This age group is therefore deemed by the researcher as a critical phase in both personal and career development, and the most appropriate for the intentions of this study.

Sampling refers to the action undertaken by the researcher to identify a population of interest, or unit of analysis, that becomes the focus of the study. For the purposes of this study it was decided to use purposeful sampling, a strategy that is non-probabilistic in nature. Purposeful sampling is commonly used within qualitative studies, as information-rich sources can be identified and asked to participate in the research, “thereby providing the opportunity to elicit a detailed, rich description and analysis of data” (Durrheim, 2006:49). In an attempt to identify such cases to participate in the study, criteria can be set to assist in the selection of the sample. This is referred to as criterion-based selection and, as the term suggests, is, “a list of criteria according to which the sample is decided upon” (Merriam, 1998:61). In the case of this study, all Life Orientation teachers at two schools, a private and a public school, in the Western Cape were informed about the study and asked to voluntarily participate. The areas in which the two schools are located differs in terms of context (specifically cultural, social and socio-economic), enabling the researcher to compare the experiences and opinions of the Life Orientation teachers in the different environments. The principals and heads of department (HODs) of the two schools were approached to volunteer for individual interviews to verify the contexts in which the schools are located, as well as the nature of curriculum implementation in the Life Orientation classroom. This would inform the primary research question and aim of the study which was to explore Life Orientation teachers’

² FET phase refers to the Further Education and Training Phase (Grades 10-12) which provides access to higher education and facilitates the transition from schools to the workplace (SAPublishing, 2008).

experiences of context in the implementation of the curriculum. It is from the data collected from this sample that the findings of the study were drawn.

1.6.3 Data Collection Methods

A number of methods are used by qualitative researchers to collect data, such as in-depth interviews, oral history, focus group interviews, case studies (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006), and the, “use of personal experiences” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005:34). The methods which were identified as being most relevant for this study, as well as likely to lend themselves to the access to information-rich data, were self-administered questionnaires, focus group interviews, and semi-structured individual interviews with participants in their relevant contexts.

Interviewing, be it with individuals or a group, is, “a dynamic and active process in which both interviewer and interviewee play an important role”. One of the main aims of interviewing is to gain insight into the interviewee’s world (Patton, 2002:341). It, “involves *direct* personal contact with the participant” (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000; 2004:104), which is well-suited to the applied, qualitative research design within the interpretivist framework as it entails interaction with the participants of the study, allowing for an in-depth exploration of the research topic through open-ended questioning. In this study individual interviews will be conducted with the two principals of the relevant schools as well as with the head of the Life Orientation department (HOD) in each school.

The focus group interview presents an opportunity to collect data from a group of people who share certain characteristics and, through the medium of the group interview, allow participants to respond to questions and probes by the interviewer (Patton, 2002). The group interaction may trigger thoughts and ideas among participants that do not emerge during an individual interview (Lichtman, 2006). A common design strategy, which will be followed in this research study, is using individual interviews to follow up on group interviews. This methodology allows researchers to gain initial group data, which produces an overall group narrative, and then seek more data on specific components of the narrative (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). In this study interviews will be conducted with a focus group consisting of approximately six members from each respective school.

The focus group interview, like the individual interviews, will be facilitated by a limited number of prepared questions in the form of an interview guide, which will be posed to the group in order to access the data. The use of a general interview guide allows the interviewer the opportunity to ask all interviewees similar questions, while facilitating a meaningful conversation that can potentially benefit both the interviewer and interviewee (Patton, 2002). It therefore provides guidelines as to what topics and issues need to be explored, while allowing the researcher to deviate if relevant information arises during the interview, or to clarify any uncertainties. The interview guide further allows the researcher the opportunity to validate data collected from other sources (Maree, 2007), which strengthens the validity of the research study as a whole.

Lastly, questionnaires can be used without direct personal contact with respondents (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000; 2004), where participants complete the questionnaires without the assistance of an interviewer. This is a non-personal method of gathering data, and is advantageous in that it ensures anonymity by not requiring respondents' names – thereby helping them to be honest in their answers (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000; 2004). In addition, the interviewer's personal characteristics, and thus personal bias, is eliminated allowing respondents to reflect on and process questions subjectively, without the presence of another person.

In summary, questionnaires, focus group interviews and individual semi-structured interviews were used as data collection methods in this study, which were then coded and analysed.

1.6.4 Data Analysis

“The process of data analysis serves to bring order to the multitude and chaos of the data collected in order to achieve its purpose” (Patton, 2002:432). Data analysis is described by Thomas, Nelson and Silverman (2005, as cited in Perry, 2010:49) as, “the process of making sense out of data”. In keeping with the, “fluid, flexible and non-sequential nature of qualitative design” (Durrheim, 2006; Pope, Ziebland & Mays, 2006 as cited in Perry, 2010:49), the researcher revisited various phases of data analysis in order to deepen, clarify and adjust an understanding of the emerging data. The phases of data analysis used in this study were conducted within the descriptive and interpretivist framework and design, namely the preparatory phase (recording of data), descriptive phase (classification and coding of

data), and interpretive phase (meaningful interpretation of data). These are discussed in more detail in section 3.4.2.4.

1.6.5 Data Verification

According to Durrheim (2006), the credibility of one's research determines the usefulness of the data obtained. In qualitative research the various approaches used to improve the quality of a study are broadly placed under the heading of 'trustworthiness'. Trustworthiness is in turn made up of four other issues: generalizability/transferability, dependability, credibility, and confirmability (Sammure & Given, 2008).

"Since the findings of a qualitative project are specific to a small number of particular environments and individuals, it is impossible to demonstrate that the findings and conclusions are applicable to other situations and populations" (Shenton, 2004:69). *Generalisability* therefore refers to the, "extent to which the interpretive account can be applied to other contexts than the one being researched" (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:431). Although the findings of some studies may not be generalizable, they can, however, be *transferable*, in the sense that they may inform further study on the topic, using different research designs. It is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that sufficient contextual information is provided about the fieldwork sites to enable the reader to make the necessary transfer (Shenton, 2004).

The qualitative research tradition assumes that research occurs in an ever-changing context (Leonard, 2005). The notion of *dependability* accommodates and supports this idea, providing a solution for the positivist notion that the universe is not changing and that research can be replicated perfectly (Leonard, 2005). There is a recognition of change and flexibility in the real world, and thus in the research design and process. This supports the interpretivist paradigm which is grounded in subjectivity, rather than absolute truth.

Lincoln and Guba (as cited in Shenton, 2004) emphasise the close ties between dependability and credibility, arguing that, in practise, the success of the former is largely dependent on the demonstration of the latter. *Credibility* refers to the accurate identification and description of the subject (phenomenon) being studied (Leonard, 2005). This is, according to Marshall and Rossman (1995 as cited in Leonard, 2005), the *internal validity* of a study, which the researcher can ensure by clearly stating the parameters of the research study, including those

pertaining to the setting, population and theoretical framework. These parameters are discussed in more detail in chapter 3.

Confirmability is the criterion of having another study confirming the findings of a particular study (Leonard, 2005). Marshall and Rossman (1995, as cited in Leonard, 2005:127) formulate this criterion as the question of whether the evidence helps confirm the general findings of a study, thus focusing on, “the evidence itself rather than on some inherent characteristic of the researcher”. In other words, due to the difficulty in ensuring objectivity in a qualitative study, the purpose of credibility is to, “help ensure as far as possible that the work’s findings are the result of the experiences and ideas of the informants, rather than the characteristics and preferences of the researcher (Shenton, 2004:72). The role of *triangulation* in promoting such confirmability must thus be emphasised.

Triangulation refers to, “the use of a variety of data sources in a study” (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:430). In this study questionnaires, focus group interviews, and in-depth individual interviews formed the various sources of data that were used to verify the information obtained. Despite the common methodological shortcomings of both individual and focus group interviews, Guba, Brewer & Hunter (as cited in Shenton, 2004:65) believe that, “the use of [these] different methods in concert compensates for their individual limitations and exploits their respective benefits”.

A more in-depth discussion about qualitative research strategies used to ensure the trustworthiness of the study will be presented in chapter 3.

1.7 ETHICAL CONCERNS

All research must operate within clear ethical guidelines in order to protect both participants and researchers (Cohen & Crabtree, 2008). Firstly, of utmost importance is the principle of privacy and confidentiality. Participation in research must be voluntary and people can refuse to divulge certain information about themselves (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000; 2004). This right to privacy demands that direct consent be obtained from adults; and moreover, that this consent be informed. In addition, the rights and limitations to confidentiality are to be clearly explained to participants, who again must have the right to make an informed decision about their participation in the study. Secondly, any potential risks resulting from the research must be recognised and reduced. This includes the protection of the participants’ physical and

emotional well-being, their rights, and their confidential information (Cohen & Crabtree, 2008).

In order to ensure that these ethical considerations are met, ethical clearance for this study was first sought and obtained from the Ethical Committee of the Department of Research Development at Stellenbosch University (Reference: REC-050411-032), as well as from the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) (a copy of these documents is included in Addenda A and B). Consent forms outlining the purpose and objectives of the study, as well as rights to confidentiality and protection against any potential risks, were then given to each participant (see Addenda C and D). The ethical considerations pertaining to this investigation, as well as the various steps taken to address these, are discussed more thoroughly in section 3.7.

1.8 KEY CONCEPTS

This section focuses on providing the reader with greater clarity of important concepts that will emerge throughout the research study, all of which address the research questions presented in section 1.3.

1.8.1 Life Orientation, also referred to as Life Skills

The study of the self in relation to others and to society. A compulsory subject for all South African learners (DoE, 2003).

1.8.2 Curriculum

The means and materials with which students will interact, with the purpose of achieving identified educational outcomes (Ebert, Ebert & Bentley, 2013).

1.8.3 Public school

A school that is state-controlled and supported by the school governing body, which is obliged to, “take all reasonable measures within its means to supplement the resources provided by the State in order to improve the quality of education provided by the school to all learners at the school” (Section 36 of the South African Schools Act, 1996 as cited in DoE, 2006a:11).

1.8.4 Private school

A school that is privately governed and receives no state subsidy. These schools, “vary substantially in age, size, location, socio-economic status, facilities, staff, mission, governance, representivity, religious or secular identity, community service, cost structure, endowments, financial viability, rates of fees, and quality of teaching and learning” (DoE, 2006a:12).

1.8.5 Context

Physical, social and cultural setting surrounding an event or occurrence (LabSpace, [n.d.]). From a socio-cultural perspective, it is, “the weaving together of the learner with other people and tools into a web or network of sociocultural interactions and meanings that are integral to the learning” (Russel, 2002 as cited in LabSpace, [n.d.]).

1.8.6 FET

Further Education and Training Phase (grades 10-12). Providing access to higher education and facilitating the transition from schools to the workplace (SAPublishing, 2008).

1.8.7 OBE

Outcomes Based Education: A process that involves the restructuring of curriculum, assessment, and reporting practises in education to reflect the achievement of high order learning and mastery rather than the accumulation of course credits (Tucker, 2004 as cited in Butler, 2004). The implementation of this approach failed in South Africa, leading to various revisions of the curriculum, such as the RNCS (Revised National Curriculum Statement) and CAPS.

1.8.8 C2005

Curriculum 2005: The South African version of outcomes based education (OBE) (Horn, 2010).

1.8.9 CAPS

Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement: a single, comprehensive, and concise policy document, which will replace the current subject and learning area statements, learning programme guidelines and subject assessment guidelines for all the subjects listed in the National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12 (DoBE, 2014).

1.9 STRUCTURE OF PRESENTATION

The structure of this research thesis is as follows:

Chapter 1: This chapter provided an introduction to the study and contextualised the research. In addition, the research process and design was presented.

Chapter 2: Provides an in-depth exploration of the relevant literature related to Life Orientation, the theoretical framework for this study and CAPS.

Chapter 3: This chapter presents a detailed discussion of the research process, including aspects such as research methodology, research design and paradigm, as well as the ethical considerations that were addressed in this study.

Chapter 4: Presents the research findings. A discussion and interpretation of these findings are also provided.

Chapter 5: This chapter comprises the summary and conclusion for this study. Recommendations based on the study and perceived limitations of the study are also discussed.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The literature review in a research study accomplishes several purposes: It shares the results of other studies with the reader that are closely related to the study being reported; and it relates the current study to the larger ongoing dialogue in the literature about a topic, filling in gaps and extending prior studies (Creswell, 2003). It also provides a backdrop for the reader, contextualising the topic at hand.

In this chapter Life Orientation will be explored with a particular focus on the role that context plays in teachers' implementation of this subject in the classroom. The theoretical framework upon which this literature study is based will be introduced, and context will then be discussed, focusing on the role that it plays in curriculum development and implementation. An in-depth exploration of Life Orientation will then be presented, where the role of the educator in effectively implementing the subject topics as set out by the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) will be discussed. Professional teacher development will also be explored, looking at both local and global initiatives for training teachers as a means to adequately implement the Life Orientation curriculum and to develop the necessary skills and values intended for life and work in the outside world.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

All researchers bring a set of assumptions and beliefs to a study, and therefore research is inherently filtered through the researcher's ontological and epistemological beliefs (Shankar-Brown, 2008). A researcher's paradigm situates and funnels a study. The need to clarify a researcher's inquiry lens is crucial because his/her theoretical orientation guides and influences the entire research process including the formation of questions and the collection and interpretation of data (Creswell cited in Shankar-Brown, 2008). This study is grounded in Urie Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) and is informed by Vygotsky and social constructivism, and the interpretive lens. Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological approach served as the meta-theory of this study.

2.2.1 Bio-ecological systems theory

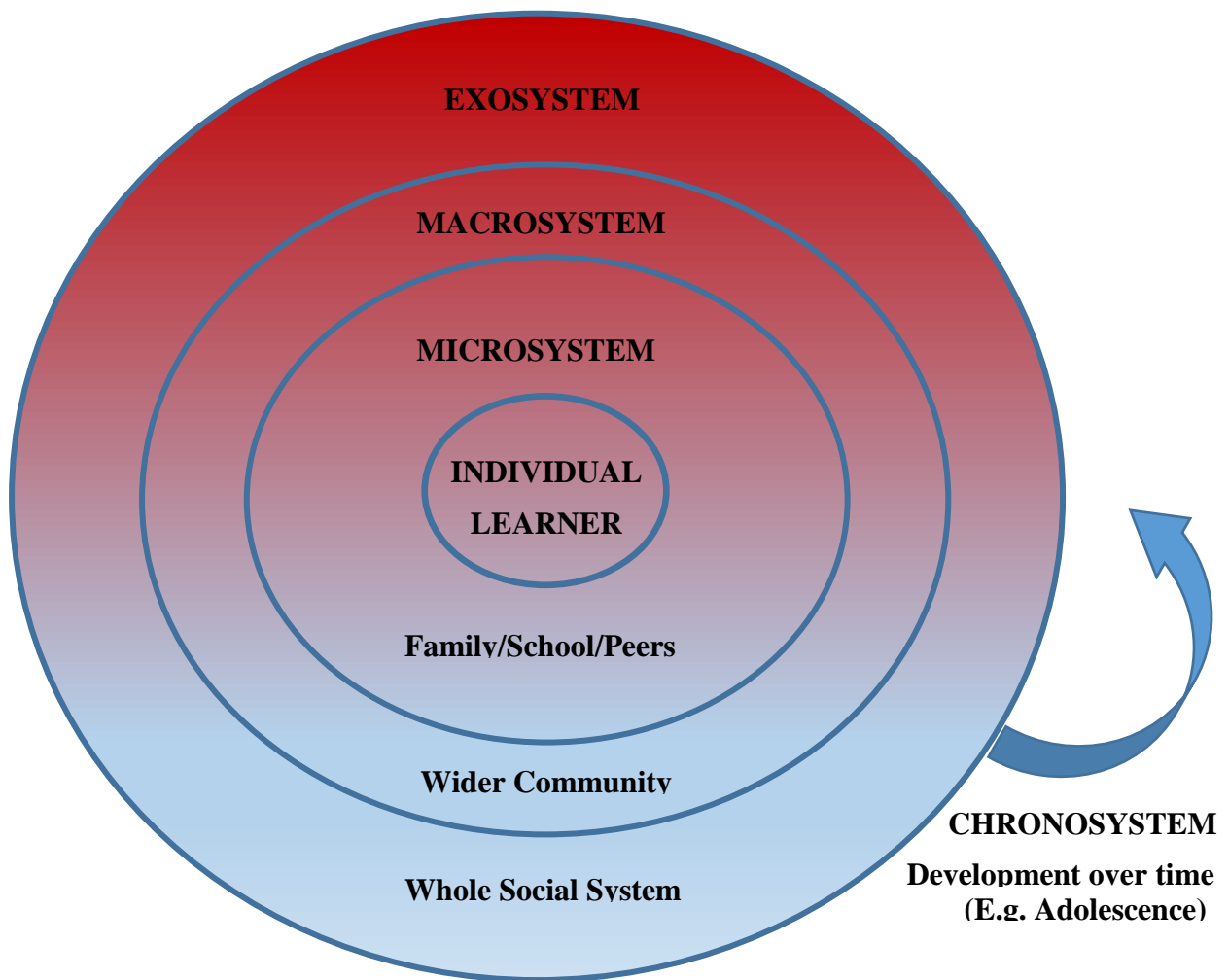
Formerly known as the ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 2005), the bio-ecological model – developed by renowned psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner - uses a multidimensional approach to view reality, by examining the external social world in which a child develops (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). The name of this model was changed in order to emphasise that a child's biology is also a primary environment that influences development. It assumes that reality and knowledge are shaped and influenced by dominant cultural assumptions and the historical and cultural environment in which they are generated (Shankar-Brown, 2008). According to this view, individuals both shape and are shaped by social context.

Bronfenbrenner mapped the key *circles of influence* that surround each child (Brendtro, 2006). The most powerful circles make up the immediate life space of family, school, and peer group (the microsystem). Further, some children are involved in significant neighbourhood connections such as work, church, youth clubs, and formal or informal mentoring (the mesosystem). Surrounding these circles of influence are broader cultural, economic, and political forces (macrosystem) (Brendtro, 2006). The outermost circle, the chronosystem, entails the dimension of time, and operates at both a socio-historical level and an individual level (Shankar-Brown, 2008). It is “the dimension within which all systemic changes interact with a child's progressive stages of development” (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2010:41) – thus informing the focus on adolescence as a developmental stage (i.e. FET phase) for the purposes of this research study. In a description of the chronosystem, Bronfenbrenner explains:

The individual's own developmental life course is seen as embedded in and powerfully shaped by conditions and events occurring during the historical period through which the person lives ... [and] the timing of biological and social transitions as they relate to the culturally defined age, role, expectations, and opportunities occurring throughout the life course (Bronfenbrenner, 2005:641).

Using Bronfenbrenner's approach as a framework for this research, the underlying assumption is that context implies a number of interrelated systems that are unique to the environment in which the learners and educators find themselves. Realities and experiences of the world are therefore multidimensional, subjective and dependent upon the systems in which one finds oneself – political, cultural, socio-economic, and educational. The focus of this research study is on context, or in relation to Bronfenbrenner's 2005 model (see Figure 2.1), the macrosystem, i.e. "dominant social and economic structures, as well as values, beliefs, and practices that influence all other social systems" (Donald et al., 2010:41), and the role that this plays in teachers' implementation of the Life Orientation curriculum. When exploring the experiences of educators, it is thus important to acknowledge that there is no one objective truth or reality, hence the broader theoretical framework upon which this study is based: social constructivism.

Figure 2.1: Bronfenbrenner's Bio-Ecological System



Adapted from: Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana (2010:40).

2.2.2 Social constructivism

Social constructivism falls under the broader post-modernist paradigm – a philosophical stance emphasising the idea of ‘no fixed truth’. Followers of this theoretical construct believe that, “individuals create and perceive their own reality or truth, reflecting a multiculturally diverse world in which different individuals can have their own view of what is real for them” (Sharf, 2006:263). In simple terms, the belief is that each individual constructs his or her own reality, based on their own perceptions and experiences of the world: their subjective truth. For the purposes of this study, through gaining insight into the subjective truths and perceptions of the Life Orientation teachers, one will be able to gain a deeper understanding

of the role that context plays in these teachers' implementation of the curriculum in their respective environments.

Sociocultural approaches to learning and development were first systematised and applied by Vygotsky and his collaborators in Russia in the 1920's and 1930's. In his work, Vygotsky emphasised the 'social' aspect of learning and acquisition of knowledge – the idea that culture, history, and politics are constructed mutually with others in the community. Learning always takes place within a specific social context, e.g. the classroom, the teacher, the culture of the school, and the broader community (i.e. Bronfenbrenner's systems) all influence how people construct their definition of education and what it can do for them (Gillespie, 2002). "This process ... requires a deep understanding that all knowledge is inseparable from a teacher's or student's culture, language, experience and beliefs" (Gallagher, 2004 as cited in Kugelmass, 2006:7). It is essentially a theory which informs the way in which learners acquire information in the classroom and learning environment, where emphasis is placed on learning through social interaction, with value placed on cultural background (University College Dublin, n.d.). At its core, social constructivism proposes that no single answer is appropriate for every student, in any given context (Richardson, 2003). This approach centres on the ways in which power, the economy, political, and social factors affect how groups of people form understandings and formal knowledge about their world - "These bodies of knowledge are not considered to be objective representations of the external world" (Richardson, 2003:1624). The theoretical basis of this approach links with Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 2005), which takes into account the various systems (micro-, macro-, exo-, meso-, and chrono-systems) that play a role in an individual's learning and behaviour; and thus takes a social constructivist viewpoint in the belief that experiences within these systems are mutually constructed and subjective.

In the next section, curriculum development and its contextual influences will be discussed in more detail in order to provide a more in-depth understanding of the theoretical framework within which this study is situated.

2.3 CONTEXT AND THE CURRICULUM

"Every person's context is individual to them and is the ultimate form of personalization of the world and of the elements of the world which can contribute to learning"

(Luckin, et al., 2010:73).

Context is therefore as diverse as culture and socio-economic status – factors which also contribute to learning and development, as illustrated by Bronfenbrenner's 2005 bio-ecological systems theory in Figure 2.1. It is defined as the background, environment, framework, setting, or situation surrounding an event or occurrence (*Context*, n.d.).

For a learner, a context is a situation defined through interactions in and with the world within which they themselves are historically situated and culturally idiosyncratic. In the case of the learner, social interactions are of particular importance (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986 as cited in Luckin et al., 2010); and these interactions are conveyed through a developed curriculum that is implemented by the teacher in the classroom.

This curriculum, according to Coles (2003, as cited in Arowolo, Zakari & Ibrahim, 2010:3), is more than a list of topics to be covered by an educational programme. "A curriculum is first of all a policy statement about a piece of education, and secondly an indication as to the ways in which that policy is to be realised through a programme of action". It is Buckland's belief (as cited in Gultig, Hoadley & Jansen, 2008:35) that a curriculum must be regarded as a process, rather than product, "a process of selecting and refining the content of an education system with an aim of implementing it in schools or educational institutions". This process should be embedded in the social, political, and economic context.

Lemmer and Badenhorst (as cited in Primrose & Alexander, 2013) mention that a situational analysis of curriculum development should take into account the short- and long-term needs, interests, and potential of those who are to be educated. "The needs of the learner are not static" (Primrose & Alexander, 2013:57). The South African learner is presented with a curriculum that is constantly evolving and adapting in response to social, political, and economic developments (Gultig, et al., 2008). This corresponds with Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 2005), which takes into account the external influences on an individual's growth and development and, thus, if learners are to develop accordingly, this needs to be taken into consideration when developing the school curricula. In addition, it ties in with Vygotsky's social constructivist theory in that it assumes that teachers' experiences of the curriculum are largely subjective, as they are influenced by a number of external influences. Through an interpretive lens, these opinions and experiences of the Life Orientation curriculum will be contextual and multidimensional. Thus, context and

curriculum cannot be separated as it is context which ultimately influences the development of the curriculum.

A number of studies have been conducted, both locally and internationally, where researchers have focused specifically on the curriculum and its implementation with regards to cultural and social context. According to Väyrynen (2003:4), it is curricula [that], “often create significant barriers to learning”. He describes curricula as comprising of three dimensions: the *formal curriculum*: Revised National Curriculum Statement (and now CAPS) which gives the direction to educators – “educators use this framework to plan their work in terms of content, outcomes, methods and assessment”; the *informal curriculum*: which is about ‘unplanned’ learning – “learning that happens in our daily interaction with our environment”; and the *hidden curriculum*: a dimension which is rather difficult to grasp because it is about “values, principles and practices that learners are supposed to follow or learn intuitively” (Väyrynen, 2003:6). In addition, he believes that learning has been affected by a number of factors, primarily stemming from curricula design and implementation, namely:

- Negative attitude towards differences
- Inflexible curriculum
- Inappropriate language of learning and teaching
- Inappropriate communication
- Inaccessible and unsafe built environment
- Inadequate support
- Irresponsive teaching/learning practices

Väyrynen (2003:5)

These findings are similar to those uncovered in a study conducted by Barnhardt (1981; 2006:7), who believes that “the subject-matter approach” to curriculum content was resulting in, “static, discrete knowledge and skills in a rapidly changing and expanding social and cultural environment”. He concludes that, “a more flexible and adaptive curriculum design is needed” so that curriculum content can be applicable to a wider range of cultural conditions and allow for greater flexibility in the processes of instruction (Barnhardt, 1981; 2006:8).

This, he emphasises, will require the role of the teacher to change, “from that of transmitter of knowledge and skills, to that of organizer of learning activities” (Barnhardt, 1981; 2006:26). This, however, presents a separate challenge. A study conducted by O’Neal, Ringler and Rodriguez (2008:5) found that, “teacher education institutions ... have sent new teachers into the classroom with minimal information regarding patterns of language and social development ... and few pedagogical strategies for helping pupils learn”. This has resulted in recommendations for a, “coherent approach to educating culturally responsive teachers” (O’Neal et al., 2008:5). This ties in with Barnhardt’s (1981; 2006:4) concept of *cultural eclecticism*, which he describes as, “the assistance of the student by the school in understanding the nature of the diverse experiences which are a natural part of his/her existence”, thus contributing to the development of an integrated cultural perspective suitable to the student’s needs and circumstances. He believes that, “curriculum development usually does not explicitly address the social context in which learning takes place, nor does it consider the underlying cultural processes by which the content is acquired and utilized” (Barnhardt, 1981; 2006:5). As a result, this hampers learning: “If the categories of learning employed by the school cannot be tied to the experiences of the student, they will not stimulate much interest or understanding” (Barnhardt, 1981; 2006:7). For this reason, Koga and Hall (2011) suggest *curriculum modification* as a solution. Modification refers to “combinations of altered content knowledge, conceptual difficulty, educational goals, and instructional method versus building scaffolding and bridges between existing curriculum and people involved in the educational process” (Koga & Hall, 2004:2).

O’Neal et al. (2008) conclude that the curriculum in teacher education needs to be updated to reflect the needs of the student population. This appears to be a global requirement. In a study conducted by Döbert (2000), the most important precondition for an improvement in the quality of lessons was found to be *teacher competence*. Döbert believes that by being *socially* competent, teachers will be able to, “react appropriately to different pupils in different situations” (Döbert, 2000:48). A number of studies have been conducted on this topic, and interesting results yielded. Moon and Callahan (2001 as cited in Koga & Hall, 2011) researched the effectiveness of curriculum modification on general education student’s learning achievements (more than half of the participants were from low socio-economic environments). Through emphasising a student-centered approach to education, and organising lessons relevant to student’s lives – considering a pattern of classroom interaction,

using materials familiar to students from varied cultural backgrounds – “curriculum modification was found to positively affect the improvement of students’ academic achievement, especially students identified as at-risk for academic failure” (Koga & Hall, 2011:11). Tieso (2001, as cited in Koga & Hall, 2011) conducted a similar qualitative study and found that the teachers and students preferred the modified unit, which involved hands-on activities. With a student-centered approach, although direct instruction is teacher controlled, it is centred on the pupil. The teacher takes full responsibility whereby, despite different learning preconditions, “pupils acquire in an active form the most important syllabus contents with an in-depth understanding of the matter” (Döbert, 2000:48). Yet, in reality, “many teachers tend to make inconsistent and unsystematic use of curriculum modification” due to, “the lack of training and their doubts of ineffectiveness” (Koga & Hall, 2011:22). In actual classrooms, modifying curriculum may require teachers to use their creativity and flexibility (Koga & Hall, 2011); and thus, in order to successfully achieve the above-mentioned shifts in curricula and instruction, “profound and professional teacher training” is required (Döbert, 2000:48).

The question arises of which way contextual factors do, in fact, affect curriculum development.

2.3.1 Contextual factors influencing curriculum development

As discussed in section 1.2., a number of factors play a role in learning and development. The following factors have been identified by Arowolo, Zakari and Ibrahim (2010) as influential in the development of curricula: political, social, cultural, and global.

2.3.1.1 Political factors

According to Primrose and Alexander (2013), education can be used to further political ideologies which, in turn, influence power structures in society. Any changes in policies or political ideologies influence the education system and thus the corresponding curriculum. Our national curriculum is a socio-cultural construction (Davis, 2007) and, as such, it is not a neutral object. “It is shaped by the politics and aspirations of those who manipulate it” (Davis, 2007:33).

South Africa has experienced dramatic political shifts over the past two decades, and these have greatly influenced education and curriculum development in our country. Historically, education was central to successive apartheid governments’ efforts to segregate racial groups and maintain white majority rule (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2008). The new democratic government was faced with the task of both rebuilding the system and redressing past inequalities. It began by attempting to unify national policy, increase access to education, and ‘revamping’ the curriculum (OECD, 2008). “A new curriculum high on knowledge and skills and based on the values of the Constitution has been introduced and streamlined and procedures set in place to monitor educational quality” (OECD, 2008:38). With racial segregation came not only educational, but socio-economic inequalities as well. Poverty is still endemic in South Africa and, “directly affects the affordability of, access to, and potential benefits from, education” (OECD, 2008:32). In addition to this, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and other communicable diseases are rife in many communities, requiring children to become heads of households and learn specific skills and values in order to live optimally in their immediate environments.

2.3.1.2 Social Factors

Society has its own expectations about the aims and objectives that should be considered when designing the curriculum. It also has a perception of what the product of the school system should look like. Parents are regarded as an important component of the education system and have an input in curriculum development (Primrose & Alexander, 2013). Society expects the curriculum to address its philosophies and its expectations for the future (Primrose & Alexander, 2013) and it is therefore necessary for curriculum designers to take into account these societal considerations. If this does not happen, “the curriculum becomes irrelevant”. The knowledge, skills, values and attitudes imparted to learners are expected to prepare them to fit in society. Therefore, the, “curriculum has to address the needs of students and society” (Primrose & Alexander, 2013:7). South Africa has a diverse society – partly due to past inequalities and political influences – and due to these differences one needs to question whether the curriculum should be diversified and modified in order to meet the needs of the members of society in their various socio-economic and cultural contexts so that they are able to live optimally in their individual environments.

According to Maslow (1943; 1970 as cited in Learning Theories Knowledgebase, 2013), human behaviour is stimulated by the urge to satisfy needs, and lower level needs must be at least temporarily satisfied before learners can be motivated by higher needs. These lower level needs or ‘basic needs’ are the needs for food, safety, and shelter, and are often unsatisfied in lower socio-economic environments. These needs therefore need to be fulfilled before learners’ higher or ‘growth’ needs can be satisfied, such as the need to know and understand – needs which learners in middle to high socio-economic environments are more geared towards developing (Learning Theories Knowledgebase, 2013). This ties in with Elliot Eisner’s research (1985, as cited in Gultig, et al., 2008), where he concludes that schools are essentially institutions created to serve the interests of society. Schools of skills in particular, according to Eksteen (2009), cater to intellectually mildly disabled learners (IMD learners) who pose particular challenges to their school environments; and yet the results of his study yielded that, despite ongoing in-service training initiatives, teachers insisted that they need learner-specific guidance as they were incapable of providing suitable learning to their learners (Eksteen, 2009). As such, “a school’s mission is to locate social needs, or at least be sensitive to those needs, and to provide the kinds of programmes that are relevant for

meeting the needs that have been identified” (Eisner, 1985, as cited in Gultig, et al., 2008:120).

For this reason, it is important to explore cultural influences on curriculum development, as well as international/global effects, as the rapid pace of technology has hurtled the world into the 21st century without much preparation or warning, having an influence on all cultures and societies around the globe.

2.3.1.3 Cultural Factors

“Education is deeply implicated in the politics of culture”. The curriculum is never a neutral assemblage of knowledge, somehow appearing in the texts and classrooms of a nation. It is part of a *selective tradition*, someone’s selection, and some group’s vision of legitimate knowledge. “It is produced out of the cultural, political, and economic conflicts, tensions, and compromises that organize and disorganize a people” (Davis, 2007:33). Just as our country is represented by diverse racial and socio-economic groups, it is also made up of a multitude of cultures and traditions and thus, “the design of curricular materials and their presentation should accommodate the culture of the society that the curriculum is seeking to serve” (Chikumbu & Makamure, 2000:28).

Life Orientation sets out to prepare learners to be active members of society and of their communities and, “the curriculum content must be applicable to the solution of the problems affecting the society which uses it” (Chikumbu & Makamure, 2000:18). Students must have an investment in the curriculum otherwise, according to Eisner (1985, as cited in Gultig et al., 2008:117), “schooling is likely to be little more than a series of meaningless routines, tasks undertaken to please someone else’s conception of what is important”. Teachers therefore need to understand the experiences and perspectives that students bring to educational settings and, “be responsive to the cultures of different groups in designing curriculum, learning activities, classroom climates, instructional materials and techniques, and assessment procedures” (Kirkland 2003 as cited in Oran, 2009). They need to choose and adapt content, instructional materials, and evaluation instruments to, “reflect and respond to the rich and complex diversity of the students they teach” (Boles & Kelly, 2009:1). A one-size-fits-all curriculum may therefore prove to be irrelevant, as it is not culturally diversified to meet the needs of the South African society (Primrose & Alexander, 2013).

Along the same vein, curriculum designers still cannot afford to ignore technology and its influence on the curriculum (Chikumbu & Makamure, 2000). There is rapid worldwide economic transformation towards an information-based or knowledge-based economy. “The new generations are expected to be more self-learning, creative and adaptive to the changing environment with multiple intelligences and global outlook” (Cheng, 2001:6). Thus, it is important to recognise the role that international/global factors play in curriculum design and development.

2.3.1.4 International/Global Factors

Membership to various international organisations has influenced curriculum reform. Membership to the Commonwealth, United Nations and its specialised agencies like UNESCO, UNICEF, and UNFPA, and the Organisation of African Unity (African Union), has led to the introduction of programmes such as HIV/AIDS Education, Environmental Science Education, Culture of Peace, Reproductive Health Education and Population Education, into the curriculum. Like parents, employers also have an input in curriculum development because they know the curriculum that is marketable in the world of work (Primrose & Alexander, 2013). With the rapid pace of technology and the shift in 21st century careers, preparation for the world of work requires input from employers at both a global and national level. This ties in with *economic factors*, as both concern the adaptation of education to the exigencies of the contemporary society regarding successful integration into the labour market (Măță, 2012).

“The pedagogical aim of teachers is becoming heavily influenced by efficiency, economics and the politics of the consumer” (Davis, 2007:36), and they need to be more aware of the ramifications of what they are asked to do. If the aim of education is to educate children so that they have a critical understanding of the world and are able to participate in a social democracy then teachers must be encouraged to stand up for these ideals (Davis, 2007). This suggests that the curriculum is in fact two-fold: it is required to meet the needs of the society in its immediate environment, as well as the needs of the global/international realm in which students find themselves. This is what Cheng (2001) refers to as the *localisation* and *globalization* of education and the curriculum.

The implications of localisation on education are to, “maximize the local relevance, community support, and initiative in schooling, teaching, and learning” (Cheng, 2001:9). The localisation of the curriculum is a pivotal process for providing greater flexibility to allow learning to become more meaningful and relevant (IBE, n.d.), making the local culture an integral part of the curriculum. When embarking on a process of localisation, educators at all levels in an education system are required to adopt additional responsibilities, new roles and to perform familiar tasks in different way (IBE, n.d.). This, however, brings with it a number of challenges, namely:

- Lack of competent staff
- Teachers’ negative attitudes and potential resistance
- Fear of the unknown
- Lack of resources

(IBE, n.d.)

These difficulties can be addressed through appropriate and effective teacher training, which will be discussed in more detail in section 2.5.2.

Globalisation, on the other hand, refers to, “new curriculum content on technological, economic, social, political, cultural, and learning globalization” (Cheng, 2001:8). The new human capital paradigm is no longer just about having extended years of schooling to prepare students for industrial jobs; it is about content mastery, deep disciplinary understanding as well as acquiring the soft skills of communication, initiative, resilience, group dynamics and problem-solving abilities, amongst others (International Alliance of Leading Institutes [IALEI], 2008). This requires educators, and Life Orientation educators in particular, to adapt learning content to not only prepare learners for life in their immediate communities, but life in the global economy as well – “ensuring that indigenous needs are met through localized curricula, without deviating too markedly from those offered elsewhere in the world” (DoE 1995, as cited in Gultig, et al., 2008:8).

2.3 LIFE ORIENTATION

2.4.1 Origin

The introduction of Life Orientation as a subject in the South African curriculum became fundamental to ensure that all learners were treated equally, and that they recognise themselves as worthwhile human beings. It intends to, “promote social justice, human rights, and inclusiveness, as well as a healthy environment” (DoE, 2003:5). It aims to achieve this through, “equipping learners to engage on personal, psychological, neuro-cognitive, motor, physical, moral, spiritual, cultural, socio-economic and constitutional levels, to respond positively to the demands of the world, to assume responsibilities, and to make the most of life’s opportunities” (DoE, 2003:9).

South Africa’s unique situation – a new democracy following years of oppression and exploitation, leaving in its midst social problems such as extreme poverty, drug and alcohol abuse, and urgent health problems – coupled with the new global market and rapidly changing economic structure, contributed to the creation of the Life Orientation subject area. If properly implemented, Life Orientation has the potential to, “improve the quality of life of all learners as future citizens by establishing a society based on democratic values, social justice and human rights” (Panday, 2007:7).

With the introduction of this subject, guidance services originally offered in school institutions throughout South Africa were officially phased out. These services incorporated a number of activities aimed at the vocational and general development of students, namely group guidance – which focused on career, educational, social and personal development – as well as life-skills programmes, individual psychometric testing, and counselling (Tlhabane, 2009). Guidance was couched within the apartheid educational philosophy of the National Education Policy Act (39) of 1967. This act imposed that, as part of its guidance curriculum, white people should be encouraged to aspire to guard their identity, placing emphasis on self-evaluation rather than self-empowerment (Tlhabane, 2009). Career guidance in most South African schools was primarily a directing and controlling process, “typified by socialisation and social control, rather than by the strengthening of personal and individual qualities” (Burns, 1986, as cited in Tlhabane, 2009:76). Guidance was simply used to perpetuate the apartheid regime’s value system, ultimately providing the youth of South Africa with very little guidance at all. The needs of employers were viewed as being paramount, while the

needs of workers were ignored (Naicker, 1994, as cited in Tlhabane, 2009), ultimately providing poor vocational and personal guidance with regards to future career and life opportunities.

The next section will look at the changing curriculum in more detail, from the early 1990's until the present day.

2.4.2 The changing curriculum

In South Africa, the 1990's saw the beginning of a shift in the education and economic realms. The country had emerged from years of repression, and democracy was securing its place. In addition to this, rapid advances in technology and global communication had begun to surface, affecting the world of business and ultimately the existing economy. There was the drive-by trade unions, supported by businesses, to link the worlds of education and training, so that learners transitioning from one to the other would eventually have their knowledge, skills and qualifications recognised in the world of work (Hofmeyr, 2010). These external influences, namely the political and socio-economic factors mentioned above, had an effect on the educational realm and ultimately the development of the school curricula. Learners were required to be exposed to different and higher levels of skills and knowledge than those required by the previous South African curricula (DoE, 2005). This was supported by the sound educational philosophy of shifting the focus away from what teachers were required to teach, to what the child is required to understand and be able to do, after the teaching has taken place (Hofmeyr, 2010).

The result of these changes and demands was the introduction of Curriculum 2005 (C2005) by the new Ministry of Education. The role of C2005 was to, "redress the imbalances of the past and overcome the stultifying legacy of apartheid education by ensuring a deeper knowledge, values and skills base for South African citizens" (Chisholm, 2002, as cited in Tlhabane, 2004:16). The challenge for this curriculum was to provide for the development of skills and competency for innovation, social development and economic growth in the 21st century. The goal of what was being referred to as outcomes-based education (OBE) was to phase in the ideal of lifelong learning for all South Africans (DoE, 1997 as cited in Tlhabane, 2004), shifting from content-based learning to outcomes-based learning; thereby developing, "curious, critical, analytic and reflective thinkers – problem-solvers who are quick to learn, as

well as flexible and able to add value to their organizations” (Lombard & Grosser, 2008:561). In addition to these critical skills, there was an intention to provide developmental skills to the learners of the new South Africa, such as, “the ability to participate as responsible citizens, the opportunity to explore career options (particularly entrepreneurial), and the importance of cultural sensitivity” (DoE 2003:2).

Reviewed in 2001, C2005 was, however, found to be problematic in both its approach and implementation: it concentrated too much on skills and the processes of learning, without sufficient specification of content and knowledge (Hofmeyr, 2010). These new critical and developmental (‘transformational’) outcomes proved too technical for the teachers in the school system and many began to voice their concerns about a lack of resources for implementation, as well as the workload and paperwork for which insufficient time was allocated (Tlhabane, 2004). According to Jansen and Christie (1999, as cited in Tlhabane, 2004), the main problem with C2005 was the lack of consistent coordination and application of the learning outcomes since teachers were not familiar with the new approach.

According to the review committee established in 2000 to investigate C2005, implementation of this curriculum was hampered by:

- A curriculum structure and design that was distorted, lacked alignment with assessment policy, and lacked clarity.
- A policy that was complex, used confusing language, and overused jargon.
- Deficient orientation, training, and development of educators and shortages of personnel and resources.
- Policy overload and inadequate transfer of learning into classrooms.
- Unmanageable time-frames for implementation.

(Adapted from DoE, 2000, as cited in Tlhabane, 2004).

In order to address these issues, the review committee proposed the introduction of a revised curriculum structure, the development of a new streamlined and strengthened version of C2005: the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) (Tlhabane, 2004). This needed

to be supported by changes in teacher orientation and training, learning support materials and the organisation, and resourcing and staffing of curriculum structures and functions in national and provincial education departments.

The status of the subject of Guidance was also reviewed in 2001 and, at the insistence of then Minister of Education, Minister Asmal, the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS 2003) was to replace the Guidance subject area with the Life Orientation learning area (DoE, 2005). Life Orientation was to draw on the core of Guidance as well as other non-examinable subjects previously known as Family Guidance, Vocational Guidance, Religious or Bible Education, Civic Education, Health Education, Youth Preparedness and Physical Education (DoE, 2005).

The implementation of this revised national curriculum, however – along with the intended outcomes of the other learning areas – has proven unsuccessful. The problems lie not so much with the underlying philosophy of OBE, i.e. the shift from content-based to outcome-based learning in order to develop, “curious, critical, analytic and reflective thinkers” (Lombard & Grosser, 2008:561) – but in the level of disciplinary and pedagogical understanding that the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) requires, and its implementation and assessment. “The crux of the matter is that there is a mismatch between the demands of RNCS and the capacity of the teaching corps as a whole” (Hofmeyr, 2010). The OBE terminology has been found to be too complex and unfamiliar for most teachers, which is compounded by poor teacher training and development (Hofmeyr, 2010). The RNCS was being implemented without enough targeted teacher training that is subject-specific or enough resources for teachers and learners in most schools and, in addition, it over-emphasises assessment and associated administration and so overloads teachers and takes them away from their core task of teaching (Hofmeyr, 2010).

In 2008, Lombard and Grosser conducted a study aimed at discovering why, a decade after they had been introduced, the critical cross-field outcomes of the OBE system were not being adequately implemented in South African school systems, with particular attention being paid to the implementation of the Life Orientation learning area. According to their findings, teachers continued to dominate classroom interaction, devoting too much time to instruction – teaching in the way they themselves were taught (Lombard & Grosser, 2008). In addition, the researchers concluded that, “teachers lack cognitive skills and are not sure how to teach

thinking strategies or how to evaluate them”, and that, “curricula are not designed in such a manner that cognitive development is structured” (Lombard & Grosser, 2008:573). Findings that emerged from the Teacher Development Summit in 2009 (29 June - 2 July 2009:21) support these findings: “Little seems to have changed about teaching and learning practices since the days of Fundamental Pedagogics” – the majority of educators today still use a single teaching method whereby, “classroom practice still tends to be dominated by teacher talk with a low level of learner participation; rote learning; a lack of meaningful questioning; lessons having a lack of structure and an absence of engaging activities; little group work or meaningful interaction between learners; and relatively few tasks requiring reading/writing” (Taylor & Vinjevold, 1999:28). In addition, it has been found that teachers tend to spend more time on assessment, due to their limited time on task (teaching and learning). Their perception is that ‘tests’ and ‘examinations’ will make the children know the work (make them clever) (Teacher Development Summit, 2009).

Without the promotion of critical thinking or the freedom to question and debate relevant topics, learners will not be adequately prepared to face a world where one’s values and morals form the cornerstone of career decisions and social interactions.

In a similar study conducted by Prinsloo (2007), the twenty teachers who were interviewed mentioned that they had had little rigorous formal training in the presentation of the Life Orientation programmes and, in addition, they felt that the Department of Education was not genuinely concerned about their problems. Taylor and Vinjevold (1999:25) support this belief. They draw attention to the fact that, “all of the OBE documents assigned a major role for the teacher in designing and developing curriculum and assessment, acknowledging the complexity of what teachers are required to do, but providing almost no advice on how to achieve what is desired”. As a result, teachers were unprepared to teach learners, leaving all involved feeling frustrated and ill-equipped (Taylor & Vinjevold, 1999).

In order to remedy these issues, Prinsloo (2007:168) believes that Life Orientation educators require professional development and training: “they need to devise ways to manage classrooms to suit the more informal atmosphere of the LO class. They should be equipped with appropriate skills to make the LO lesson dynamic and to involve the learners in the process”. In addition to possessing the appropriate skills and competencies, Prinsloo (2007) believes that teachers should possess the passion and desire to teach this subject. She

therefore suggests, as an additional remedy, that an official screening process take place in order to, “ensure that the right calibre of person is appointed in this position” (Prinsloo, 2007:168).

In 2010 the curriculum underwent a ministry review by the current Minister of Basic Education, Ms. Angie Motshekga, who declared that there would be a plan for schools in South Africa called Action Plan 2014, forming part of a larger vision called Schooling 2025. The overriding purpose of the Action Plan 2014 and Schooling 2025 is to contribute in concrete ways to the realisation of a better schooling system, one which adequately prepares young South Africans for the challenges of a rapidly changing society (DoBE, 2010a).

In addition, the aim of Action Plan 2014 is to prevent early school leaving and decrease high school drop-out rates (DoBE, 2010a). According to the Commission of the European Communities (2008:10), early school leaving means wasted potential. “It has social costs (social breakdown, increased demand on the health system, and lower social cohesion) and economic costs (lower productivity, lower tax revenues and higher welfare payments)”. The costs to the individual include, “low skills development, unemployment, lower lifetime earnings, lower participation in learning later in life, and less adaptability to change” (Commission of the European Communities, 2008:10).

The result of the 2010 review and intended Action Plan was the National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12 (January 2012), also known as the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS). The main aim is to ensure that basic skills and knowledge are acquired and values instilled, to prepare our youth for life in a united and democratic nation (DoBE, 2010b). The latest National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12 (January 2012) replaces the two current national curricula statements, namely the Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9, Government Gazette No. 23406 of 31 May 2002, and National Curriculum Statement Grades 10-12 Government Gazettes, No. 25545 of 6 October 2003 and No. 27594 of 17 May 2005. The National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12 (i.e. CAPS) serves the purposes of, “equipping learners, irrespective of their socio-economic background, race, gender, physical ability or intellectual ability, with the knowledge, skills and values necessary for self-fulfilment, and meaningful participation in society as citizens of a free country; providing access to higher education; facilitating the transition of learners from education

institutions to the workplace; and providing employers with a sufficient profile of a learner's competences" (DoBE, 2010b:4).

The curriculum statement clearly stipulates that its desired outcome is, "a generation of learners who are able to think critically, work in teams, and contribute to a just and democratic society" (DoBE, 2010b:5). The key change is that the curriculum will no longer be framed in terms of learning outcomes and assessment standards, so as to strengthen content specification. To make it more accessible to teachers, the curriculum will be repackaged: every subject in each grade will have a single, comprehensive, concise Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) that will provide details on what teachers ought to teach and assess (DoBE, 2010b). In this way outcomes will be absorbed into more accessible aims and content will be specified in subject topics and the assessments to be covered per term. The terminology will thus be familiar – aims, topics, and subjects – and the burdensome assessment load has already been reduced (Hofmeyr, 2010).

2.4.3 The Life Orientation curriculum

Subject topics of Life Orientation provide a more detailed description of the subject, and each topic focuses on a particular skill or content knowledge that is to be acquired in order to master each subject at the specified level (DoE, 2003). Like all the other subjects in the curriculum, Life Orientation has specific topics that are required to be taught. Through these topics in the FET phase, "the learner is to be guided and prepared for life in order to contribute to a just and democratic society, a productive economy, and an improved quality of life for all" (DoE, 2003:9).

The CAPS Life Orientation curriculum in particular has been designed to allow for creative and flexible learning to take place, through the inclusion of informal and practical assessments and projects (DoBE, 2010b:8).

The subject contains the following six topics:

- 1 Development of the self in society;
- 2 Social and environmental responsibility;

- 3 Democracy and human rights;
- 4 Careers and career choices;
- 5 Study skills; and
- 6 Physical education.

(DoBE, 2010b:8)

2.4.3.1 Overview of learning topics

- **Development of the self in society**

This topic promotes the development of self-awareness and self-esteem through encouraging and developing decision-making skills, and creating awareness of health and gender issues in the South African context (DoBE, 2010b). In addition, the importance of physical activity is emphasised, with a focus on the connection between physical and emotional development.

This is an important life skill for any learner of any culture, particularly in terms of Erikson's psycho-social stage of development, where adolescents develop a sense of self and personal identity, crucial for optimal living in the outside world (Cherry, n.d.).

- **Social and environmental responsibility**

Awareness of contemporary social and environmental issues is promoted in this topic, with an emphasis on developing healthy and safe ways of living, and improving quality of life and well-being (DoBE, 2010b).

These issues are, however, context-specific, and strategies to cope with the effects of these issues differ according to socio-economic status and cultural beliefs. An orientation of the curriculum, according to Eisner (1985 as cited in Gultig, et al., 2008), is one that derives its aims and content from an analysis of the society the school is designed to serve. "Drug abuse, sex education, parenting programmes, and ecological studies represent areas of concern for some groups, whereas black studies and sexism studies represent efforts to provide attention to what other groups believe to be important" (Eisner, 1985 as cited in Gultig, et al.,

2008:121). Thus, the social and environmental issues promoted in this topic should be learner or context-specific in order to optimally serve the population of the school and society as a whole.

- **Democracy and human rights**

“Contemporary ethical, moral and spiritual issues are explored in personal, recreational, political, and religious realms of South African society” (DoBE, 2010b:8). Again it is important that this content is personalised and adapted to the specific needs of learners, “acknowledging the ways in which different cultural values and lifestyles affect the construction of knowledge, and incorporating this in the development and implementation of the learning programme” (DoE, 1995 as cited in Gultig, et al., 2008:4).

- **Careers and career choices**

The focus of this topic is personal and practical issues surrounding careers and career choices. Learners are assisted in developing knowledge about themselves and their personal expectations regarding their career of choice, as well as requirements for admission into various fields of study and solutions to counteract financial concerns and possible unemployment (DoBE, 2010b). Due to differences in economic and technological context, this topic may need to be tailored to the particular recipients of the information. The role of the school is to maintain the status quo: “If the society needs more engineers, doctors, physicists, or skilled blue collar workers, the school is regarded as the agency through which they will be provided” (Eisner, 1985, as cited in Gultig, et al., 2008:121). Career skills and choices thus need to be imparted and delivered accordingly – with particular focus on the specific needs of the society and context within which teaching is taking place.

- **Study skills**

Study skills and methods are explored in this learning area through the identification of FET students’ learning styles and strategies, and developing time-management and study plans accordingly (DoBE, 2010b). The teaching of these cognitive processes should be determined by the educator, who is aware of the needs and capabilities (as well as limitations) of the students and can, “[cultivate] higher mental abilities by virtue of the tasks provided in the

curriculum, the materials that are used, and the kinds of questions he or she raises while teaching” (Eisner, 1985 as cited in Gultig, et al., 2008:113).

- **Physical Education**

Skills in a variety of indigenous games and sport are promoted in this learning outcome. Students are encouraged to participate in physical activity for the purposes of health and fitness promotion and personal well-being (DoBE, 2010b). However, the picture that emerges of physical education in South Africa is similar to that of guidance – “a marginalised subject, previously non-examinable, not offered by all schools and not taken seriously” (Alexander, 1998; Reddy et al., 2003; Van Deventer, 1999, 2002 and 2004; Wentzel, 2001 as cited in Rooth, 2005:114). According to Van Deventer (2002 as cited in Rooth, 2005:109), studies have indicated that, “in South African schools, 95% of the teachers are not trained to teach physical education”. Wentzel (2001, as cited in Rooth, 2005:109) discovered that, “educators still have the perception that physical education should be taught only by specialists, possibly due to the lack of educators’ confidence to teach physical education”. These attitudes of non-specialist teachers, according to Rooth (2005:109), “also impact negatively on the offering of physical education at schools”. Physical education is an essential skill for all learners, across all cultures and socio-economic brackets – particularly during adolescence, when the learner is developing a sense of self and experiencing a change in body image. According to Erikson (as cited in McLeod, 2008), the adolescent may feel uncomfortable about their body for a while until they can adapt and ‘grow into’ the changes. Physical movement is a powerful vehicle for this stage of development. In addition, it links up closely with the first topic, *Development of the Self in Society*, where learners are encouraged to build and develop a stronger self-esteem and physical body image.

2.4.3.2 Grades 10-12 Life Orientation Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement

The new CAPS Life Orientation curriculum aims to ensure that children acquire and apply knowledge and skills in ways that are meaningful to their own lives. In this regard, the curriculum promotes knowledge in local contexts while being sensitive to global imperatives (DoE, 2013). The most vital component of the Life Orientation curriculum is the development of self. Learners need to know who they are, how to think critically, and what to expect in their ever-evolving future lives and careers. They need to know how to conduct themselves appropriately in their immediate environments, and how to live optimally and successfully. The purpose of Life Skills in the School of Skills Curriculum, an adapted and

differentiated form of the CAPS curriculum (ACAPS)³, is the same as that of the national CAPS curriculum: to teach the learner social skills and prepare the learner for real life situations. Engagement with the topics will assist the learner to build positive values, change misconceptions about life issues, and encourage the learner to live a meaningful life (DoE, 2013). The academic curriculum content of the ACAPS must not be seen as a ‘watered down’ version of the mainstream curriculum, but rather as an accurate as possible reflection of the learner’s functioning level. The purpose being that each learner have access to the standard of assessment best suited to his/her needs. This is based on Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001:11) which makes it imperative that, “the education and training system must change to accommodate the full range of learning needs, with particular attention to strategies for instructional and curriculum transformation”. These principles also underlie the new Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), thus allowing comparisons to be drawn between the two selected contexts for this study, as the question remains the same: how do teachers experience the implementation of the Life Orientation curriculum (whether it be CAPS or ACAPS – which both require learner accommodation) within their specific contexts.

As discussed in section 2.3, South Africa consists of diverse cultures and communities, “all requiring diverse skills and values in order to adapt and survive in the outside world” (DoBE, 2010b:8). It is the Life Orientation curriculum that is to be the driving force behind the development of these essential skills.

An improved, user-friendly curriculum such as the new CAPS curriculum (or the ACAPS) will, however, not solve all quality problems. In the end, it depends on the competence, commitment and professionalism of the teaching force. This will involve improving teachers’ subject knowledge, professional skills, and a new system of accountability. As Mike Rice wrote in the *Business Day* (2010/07/14, as cited in Hofmeyr, 2010), “Unless teachers are committed and disciplined professionals who take their authority seriously, little can be achieved ... Unless and until the core issues of professional ethics and discipline are addressed, we cannot hope to see SA’s dismal educational performance improve”. In addition to these core issues, schools have a duty to provide their pupils with an education that will enable them to adapt to an increasingly globalised, competitive, diversified and complex

³ Adapted Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (ACAPS) designed for use in South African schools of skills.

environment, in which, “creativity, the ability to innovate, a sense of initiative, entrepreneurship and a commitment to continue learning are just as important as the specific knowledge of a given subject” (European Union, 2010:13).

Impressive progress has been made in education legislation, policy development, curriculum reform and the implementation of new ways of delivering education, but some challenges remain, in areas such as student outcomes and labour market relevance (OECD, 2008), which require critical engagement with knowledge instead of rote learning (SAPA, 07/07/2010 as cited in Hofmeyr, 2010). Hofmeyr (2010) believes that these challenges may be difficult to overcome in light of the new CAPS curriculum, which requires strict adherence to the new policies and subject topics: “The greater specification in the CAPS may mean prescription of content, pace, sequencing and assessment, and carries the danger that strict adherence will be required of independent schools and public schools” (Hofmeyr, 2010).

Despite this, the teacher does appear to play a critical role in ensuring that progress and development in the required knowledge and skills is achieved by the learners in the Life Orientation classroom. Due to their better understand of their students’ needs, as professionals, “teachers are not only justified in adapting curriculum to local constraints, but [are] also in an ideal position to repurpose curriculum” (Squire, MaKinster, Barnett, Luehmann, & Barab, 2003:471).

2.5 THE LIFE ORIENTATION TEACHER

2.5.1 The role of the LO teacher

“Great teachers have always understood that their real role is not to teach subjects but to teach students” (Robinson, 2008:249).

The teacher is the ultimate key to educational change, and the acquisition of essential life and work skills. “Teachers don’t merely deliver the curriculum; they develop, define it and reinterpret it too” (Hargreaves, 1994, as cited in Renck Jalongo, 1991:47). It is what teachers think, believe, and do at the level of the classroom that ultimately shapes the kind of learning that young people receive.

However, according to the Education White Paper 4 (DoE, 1998:21), “Professional commitment and morale amongst many educators, administrators and managers are poor”. The Report of the President’s Education Initiative Research Project (1999, as cited in Taylor & Vinjevold, 1999) concludes that the most critical challenge facing education in South Africa is the limited conceptual understanding many teachers have of the subjects they teach. “This is a result of both the inequalities and distortions of our apartheid past, as well as the evolution of our modern industrial society” (DoE, 1998:13), which has shifted the way in which information is acquired through rapid global technological advancement.

The Norms and Standards for Educators was gazetted on 4 February 2000 (DoE, 2000). This policy provides an outline of the knowledge, skills, and values that are seen as the hallmarks of a professional and competent educator. It is intended as, “a flexible instrument that can provide a basis for the generation of qualifications and learning programmes” (Parker, 2001, as cited in Robinson, 2003:22). This policy describes the competent educator as a subject specialist, leader, and manager whose role “has strategic importance for the intellectual, moral, and cultural preparation of our young people” (DoE, 2007a:4).

The cornerstone of the policy is the identification of the following seven roles and accompanying competencies for educators:

- 1 *Mediator of learning*: Construct learning environments that are appropriately contextualised and inspirational;
- 2 *Interpreter and designer of learning programmes and materials*: Understand and interpret provided learning programmes, design original learning programmes, identify the requirements for a specific context of learning, and select and prepare suitable textual and visual resources for learning.
- 3 *Leader, administrator and manager*: Manage learning in the classroom, carry out classroom administrative duties efficiently, and participate in school decision making structures.
- 4 *Scholar, researcher and lifelong learner*: Will achieve ongoing personal, academic, occupational and professional growth.
- 5 *Community, citizenship and pastoral role*: Will practise and promote a critical,

committed and ethical attitude towards developing a sense of respect and responsibility towards others.

- 6 *Assessor*: Will design and manage both formative and summative assessment in ways that are appropriate to the level and purpose of the learning and meet the requirements of accrediting bodies.
- 7 *Learning area/subject/discipline/phase specialist*: The educator will be well grounded in the knowledge, skills, values, principles, methods, and procedures relevant to the discipline.

(Adapted from DoE, 2000:6-7; 13)

The above-mentioned roles describe teachers as needing to be flexible and adaptable when designing and implementing lesson plans, and demonstrating a recognition of contextual factors as well as a strong value system that corresponds with the constitution and Bill of Rights. Teachers need to understand the economic and global contexts that underpin the curriculum because they impact on the interpretation, definition, and perception of their role (Davis, 2007). “Without an understanding of how culture, experience, readiness, and context influence how people grow, learn, and develop, it is difficult for teachers to make good judgements about how to deal with the specific events in the classroom” (Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000:525). They need to possess the qualities of, “role models, counsellors and compassionate leaders”, as it is their role to lead and guide the youth of our country in developing the skills and values necessary for life and careers in the outside world, which includes making morally responsible decisions (DoE, 2000:6-7; 13).

While all educators are expected to display these qualities, a successful Life Orientation teacher should be:

- Approachable
- A good listener
- Caring of learners and colleagues, and show empathy
- Trustworthy and able to keep confidentiality

- Sensitive to the community values
- Passionate about the fundamental values of our constitution
- Non-judgemental

(Adapted from DoE, 2000:6-7; 13).

These qualities, often in-born, can be strengthened or developed through intensive training and professional development programmes in order for educators to provide both the counselling and teaching services necessary to appropriately educate and develop their learners. “If teachers are to pursue understanding, develop and refine their criteria of judgement and their range in their subject, they must be able and they must have time and opportunity for professional development” (Stenhouse, 1975, as cited in Gultig, et al., 2008:71).

2.5.2 Professional development

“Teachers are the agentic force through which the content and intent of the curriculum is devolved.”

(Davis, 2007:32)

In order for teachers to fulfil their role, it is thus essential that adequate training be received. Teacher professional development is the tool by which policy makers convey broad visions, disseminate critical information, and provide guidance to teachers (Moeini, 2008). According to Newman (2013:1), “Teacher education plays a crucial role in preparing individuals to facilitate the teaching and learning process in schools” so that they can assist in the development of children to become productive citizens. In the findings of her study, *Enhancing Instructional Competence in Higher Education*, Nwaboku (1996:17) concludes that, “teaching is a specialized skill” and that most teachers at tertiary education level have had no previous training for the acquisition of such skills. The majority of novice teachers begin their career in a teaching environment with little or no professional assistance and are

expected to carry a full educational load immediately (Moeini, 2008). The University of South Africa (UNISA) offers Life Orientation as a didactics subject in their Bachelor of Education degree. Admission requirements are completion of Psychology 1 or Industrial Psychology 1 (UNISA, 2014). Life Orientation is thus an optional module, requiring previous specialisation in psychology. Candidates with a senior certificate and a three year recognised teaching degree are offered an Advanced Certificate in Education, with specialisation in Life Orientation. This again requires previous teaching knowledge and skills, as well as a desire to specialise in Life Orientation. The University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg (Wits) (2014) offers a Bachelor of Education degree (B.Ed.), providing Life Orientation as an optional learning area in the first and second year, with physical education and religious studies as subject specialisations in the third and fourth. This again emphasises the importance of an inherent passion for, and interest in, this subject, as it requires the acquisition of knowledge and skills that are only provided in tertiary education courses as an optional specialisation.⁴

Since the birth of democracy in 1994, many policies and laws have been put in place in South Africa to protect South African individuals and ensure equality and democracy for all. This transformation occurred at a time when the world was transforming economically and technologically and, as a result, many of the policies have included recognition of the changing roles of educators in the 21st century as well as the needs of today's generation of learners. The National Qualifications Framework (NQF, 2000; 2011) is one such example.

One of the primary objectives of the National Qualifications Framework is to enhance the quality of education and training (DoBE, 2011b) so that learners and educators are provided with hope and optimism in a constantly evolving global society. This piece of legislation was the first to be adopted by South Africa's new democratic government through the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Act No. 58 of 1995. The intention of this legislation is to create opportunities for a system, "that supports lifelong learning, social justice and democratic participation" (Nkomo, 2000:13). In theory, the National

⁴ These are just two examples of the various South African institutions offering tertiary training in the Life Orientation subject area, and thus it is important that generalisations not be made with regard to tertiary professional development.

Qualifications Framework appears to provide many of the answers to the current issues we are experiencing in our school systems, such as enabling the outcomes or standards of competence achieved in all learning programmes to be registered at the appropriate level. However, it is still considered idealistic at best; and according to the policy document, it is the responsibility of SAQA, “to oversee the development and implementation of the NQF”, as well as the responsibility of our society to encourage and support this initiative (Nkomo, 2000:2).

One of the main driving forces behind the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is the South African Council for Educators (SACE), a statutory body and public entity that has the, “responsibility to contribute towards achieving government's mandate, national priorities, goals and outcomes” (South African Council for Educators [SACE], 2011/2012 as cited in Nkomo, 2000:2). A main focus of this strategic plan is to drive the objectives of the NQF by, “[improving] teacher capacity and practices” (SACE, 2011/2012 as cited in Nkomo, 2000:3), and one of its core functions is development of the teaching profession in order to, “establish and maintain a register of professionally qualified educators” (SACE, 2011/2012 as cited in Nkomo, 2000:11). SACE is one of the key stakeholders in the 2006 National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa (DoE, 2006b). This policy framework aims to, “provide an overall strategy for the successful recruitment, retention, and professional development of teachers” (DoE, 2006b:5). It aims to ensure that teachers are appropriately qualified, properly equipped and adequately competent to take on required tasks and duties, and are able to continually enhance their professional competence and performance. Ultimately, curriculum designers need to acknowledge that their designs are not self-sufficient entities; the teachers typically better understand their students’ needs and how to conform the curriculum to the day-to-day realities of their particular school and classroom than does a designer (DoBEc, 2011:471). Thus, effective professional development requires not only competent teachers but also a relevant curriculum, which will ultimately lead to more effective content delivery in varied school contexts.

2.6 CONCLUSION

These research findings point to the challenges that teachers face in delivering the Life Orientation curriculum – particularly in varied socio-economic contexts. Educators are

required to play a particular role, which includes delivering the LO curriculum to pupils with needs that are determined by their social, political, cultural and socio-economic circumstances. And this requires specific training and development, on a tertiary as well as departmental level. Thus, by understanding teacher's experiences of their school context and the impact this has on their delivery of the curriculum, their teaching practices and professional development can be promoted. In addition, further recommendations can be made with regards to the current curriculum and its design and implementation, with particular focus on content relevance and flexibility. It can therefore be concluded that there is a need for further research into the effect of context on the implementation of the Life Orientation curriculum, particularly in the high school/FET phase.

Chapter 3 will focus on the research process, and the various techniques and strategies, as well as discuss ethical considerations in detail.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

“Research ... is an ancient and ubiquitous activity. Curiosity about others and the worlds in which they live has always been displayed through conversation, asking questions, working together to see what happens after different kinds of actions are performed, talking or gossiping about others to tease out intentions and other reasons for behaviour; clarifying and understanding circumstances; all are fundamental research functions.”

(O'Donoghue, 2007:18)

This chapter takes an in-depth look at the research paradigm and the research design employed for this study in order to answer the research questions presented in chapter 1. The methodologies, instruments, and procedures that were used to collect the data – all of which have been informed by the paradigmatic perspective – are examined in this chapter, in addition to the ethical considerations and data verification procedures pertaining to this study.

As discussed in section 1.3, this research was undertaken to provide greater knowledge of Life Orientation teachers' experience of context, and the impact that this has on their implementation of the curriculum. Before engaging in further discussion on the research process and design, it is necessary to revisit the research questions presented in the first chapter.

These research questions were as follows:

- What are Life Orientation (LO) teachers' perceptions with regards to the context of their learners?
- What are Life Orientation teachers' personal experiences with regards to the implementation of the LO curriculum in their specific contexts?

- What are Life Orientation teachers' opinions with regards to the implementation of the LO CAPS curriculum in their specific contexts?
- How do Life Orientation teachers perceive their roles in the teaching of the curriculum in the unique contexts of their learners?
- How do the experiences and opinions of Life Orientation teachers in different contexts compare?

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

As discussed in section 1.4, the interpretivist paradigm was selected by the researcher as the most appropriate paradigm for the study. A research paradigm consists of a system of beliefs and practices based on the researcher's positioning for the study concerned. This positioning "fosters particular ways of asking questions and particular ways of thinking through problems" (Schutt, 2011a:4) and is made up of the following major dimensions: ontology, epistemology, methodology, and methods. Ontological and epistemological positions invariably inform methodological and methods choices (Schutt, 2011a). Interpretivism focuses primarily on subjective human experience, allowing for a rich, detailed understanding of the participants within their specific contexts (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). This is the *ontological* grounding for the paradigm. In addition, paradigms can be viewed along the dimensions of *epistemology* (the nature of the relationship between the researcher and what can be known) and *methodology* (how to go about studying what is known) (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006).

The paradigm for this study is discussed in more detail below.

3.2.1 Interpretivism

"The goal of interpretivist research is to understand the complicated and constructed reality from the perspective of the participants."

(Shankar-Brown, 2008:14).

The interpretivist paradigm places emphasis on understanding individual interpretations of the world (Perry, 2010) and thus, for the purpose of this study, this framework will provide an understanding of individual Life Orientation teachers' experiences and interpretations of context in their implementation of the curriculum. This satisfies the ontological dimension of the research paradigm, which refers to the nature of reality that is to be studied (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006).

Although criticised for its researcher subjectivity, the epistemological nature of this interpretivist framework does allow for reflective practise and awareness of the researcher's influence over the participants and the outcome of the research. Throughout the research process, the researcher remained aware of her subjectivity, and reflected on practises and interactions with the participants. These reflections are detailed in chapter 5.

Methodologically, an interactional approach is encouraged in the interpretivist framework which, for the purpose of this study, included in-depth semi-structured and focus group interviews with the participants in their natural environment. A criticism and potential weakness of this paradigm is that it does not aim to employ scientific measurement techniques, nor does it intend to generalise the findings of the selected case to other contexts (Shankar-Brown, 2008). However, for the purpose of this study, this was an appropriate metatheory, as the intention of the research was to gain an understanding and deeper insight into the role of a specific group of teachers as well as their subjective experiences, making use of valid and reliable coding techniques. This metatheory therefore lent itself well to the research design.

Interpretivism requires a researcher to focus on, "particular people, in particular places, at particular times – situating people's meanings and constructs within and amid specific social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and other contextual factors" (Shankar-Brown, 2008:14). This study set out to explore teachers' implementation of the Life Orientation curriculum, with specific focus on their context and the role that this plays in their delivery of the curriculum. Using an interpretivist lens, the teachers' experiences and meanings will be situated within their specific context, i.e. a private school and a public school institution respectively, in the Western Cape.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design can be seen as the structure or plan which, along with the research paradigm, guides the research process (Mouton, 1996). The research design describes the connection between the research paradigm, research methodology, and methods of data collection (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

When focusing on the goals of the research, i.e. what is wished to be attained from the study, the researcher will determine whether an exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory study is more relevant to the research at hand. “Exploratory studies make preliminary investigations into relatively unknown areas of research” (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:39), employing an open-ended and inductive approach to research – the goal being to look for new insights into phenomena. “Descriptive studies aim to describe phenomena” (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:39), either through narrative-type descriptions, classification, or measuring relationships. The goal of this type of study is to seek accurate observations of already-existing phenomena with a focus on validity, reliability, and the representativeness of sampling. “Explanatory studies are designed to identify causality” (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:39), providing causal explanations of phenomena.

For the purpose of this research, a *descriptive study* will be conducted, with the intention of describing the opinions and experiences of Life Orientation teachers in their implementation of the curriculum with regards to their specific contexts. In-depth and focus-group interviewing techniques will be used, as well as self-administered questionnaires.

Any research findings resulting from the study will be used with the, “intent purpose of advancing our fundamental knowledge of the social world”, and should ideally be generalizable across a wide range of different contexts, as opposed to only the specific context under study as in applied research (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:39). It is thus further classified as a *basic* research study, where the central aim is to add to existing knowledge about a certain phenomenon, thereby increasing our understanding of it (Bless, Higson-Smith & Kagee, 2006). In conducting a basic interpretive study, one seeks to discover and understand a phenomenon, a process, the perspectives and world views of the people involved, or a combination of these (Schutt, 2011c:6). In order to do so, certain techniques are employed in the gathering and analysing of data and in drawing conclusions based on the researcher’s findings.

The types of research, which are in the third and final category of a research study, are categorised according to the conclusions and techniques employed in data collection and analysis: quantitative researchers collect data in the form of numbers and use statistical types of data analysis – “this form of data analysis has been much maligned as ‘positivist’ in its paradigmatic nature in recent years” (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:96), whereas qualitative researchers collect data in the form of written or spoken language, or in the form of observations that are recorded in language and they, “analyse the data by identifying and categorising themes” (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:42).

Because this study was conducted within an interpretivist paradigm, a qualitative design was considered as the most appropriate in terms of data collection and analysis, as it entails interaction with participants while collecting data on their subjective and narrative experiences. According to Berg (2004) and Durrheim (2006), as cited in Perry (2010:39), “qualitative research allows for a deep, detailed understanding of the subject under investigation, and takes place in the participants’ natural environment”, which, for the purpose of this study, entailed understanding the experiences of Life Orientation teachers and their approach to implementing the curriculum within their respective school contexts. The “fluid, flexible and non-sequential nature” (Perry, 2010:40) of this approach allowed the researcher to continually clarify, deepen and adjust her understanding of the emerging content. Babbie and Mouton (2001:270) indicate that qualitative research is differentiated from quantitative research according to the following core characteristics:

- Research is conducted in the natural setting of social actors.
- A focus on process rather than outcome.
- The actor’s perspective (the ‘insider’ or ‘emic’ view) is emphasised.
- The primary aim is in-depth (‘thick’) descriptions and understanding of actions and events.
- The main concern is to understand social action in terms of its specific context (ideographic motive) rather than attempting to generalise to some theoretical postulation.

- The research process is often inductive in its approach, resulting in the generation of new hypotheses and theories.
- The qualitative researcher is seen as the ‘main instrument’ in the research process.

Life Orientation teachers’ particular contexts were explored (their ‘natural setting’) and an in-depth understanding of their subjective experiences gained through making use of the researcher as the ‘instrument’ in this process. Based on this it became evident that this was a qualitative research approach, as “qualitative researchers are interested in understanding what those interpretations are at a particular point in time and in a particular context” (Merriam, 2002:4).

Furthermore, “this meaning is mediated through the researcher as instrument, the strategy is inductive, and the outcome is descriptive” (Merriam, 2002:6-7). The ontological, epistemological, and methodological dimensions of the interpretivist paradigm (as discussed in section 3.2) are thus accommodated generously in this research design, as the research strategy is inductive in nature, the subjective reality of the participants is acknowledged, as is the role of the researcher as instrument.

Thus, in keeping within the interpretivist framework and qualitative focus on gaining rich and detailed information, a *basic qualitative research design* was selected as the, “overall purpose is to understand how people make sense of their lives and their experiences” (Merriam, 2009:3), which facilitated the in-depth exploration into the research topic, i.e. the subjective and personal experiences of the Life Orientation teachers when implementing the curriculum in their specific contexts.

3.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

“Research methodology is a way to systematically solve the research problem” (Kothari, 2004:7). This includes knowing which methods and techniques are relevant or not, and what they would mean and why (Kothari, 2004). Methods are ‘the techniques or processes used to gather and analyse data related to some research question or hypothesis’ (O’Donoghue, 2007:27) and thus it is important to have a tight fit between the purpose or question and the

method selected (Schutt, 2011a). The notion of ‘methodology’, on the other hand, refers to “the bridge that brings our philosophical standpoint (ontology and epistemology) and method (perspective and tool) together” (Schutt, 2011a:6). It is, “the strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods and linking the choice and use of methods to the desired outcomes” (O’Donoghue, 2007:27). Thus, in accordance with the research design and questions, the research methods were selected. These included purposeful sampling techniques, three data collection methods (self-administered questionnaires, in-depth and focus group interviews), and qualitative data analysis within an interpretive framework.

3.4.1 Context of the research

As mentioned in sections 1.4 and 3.2, this study is placed within an interpretivist framework or paradigm, which emphasises subjectivity and context in data collection procedures. Based on this, the research methodology was established. Focus groups and in-depth interviews were conducted at two different sites – a public school and a private school institution respectively – thereby rendering each a unique context in which the researcher as the instrument carried out the data collection process. South Africa, and for the purposes of this study, the Western Cape in particular, has not only a diverse cultural, but also a diverse socio-economic population (due to a number of external factors) ultimately impacting on the education of learners. The South African education system is made up of three different types of schools: independent or private; public or government; and model C, or quasi-government schools (Power, 2013). Private education schools are mostly attended by children from middle- and high-income families; whereas the public school sector is entirely dependent on the government for funding and supplies and most often experience a serious lack of financing and monitoring from the government, “kids are getting the raw end of the deal with low standards of education, a lack of qualified teachers and in many cases, an outright absence of equipment in classrooms” (Power, 2013). The best government schools are those that are administered and funded by the parents. These so-called model C schools can offer exceptional facilities and a very high academic standard (Power, 2013).

One specific type of school institution that has been focused on in this study is a school of skills, which is a government-funded (public) school, relying on external funding for its

resources, training, and infrastructure. These schools are generally situated in and around lower socio-economic areas and cater to lower income learners. The other context this study focuses on is a private school context. These institutions are often found in middle to higher socio economic contexts, and are privately funded. The learners in these contexts have greater access to resources and finances and generally live in more affluent areas. “In South Africa, it is indeed the case that private schools are located in white areas ... whereas ‘black’ (public) schools are located in peripheral and distant townships” (Selod & Zenou, 2003:352-355). These two institutions were thus specifically selected for the comparative purposes of this study, as they differ dramatically with regards to context but also share basic foundational similarities required for the relative comparisons to be drawn. Both institutions fall under the legal policy framework and regulations of the Western Cape Education Department and both cater to learners between the ages of 14 and 18 years. As stated in section 1.6.2, this age group was deemed most appropriate by the researcher for this study as these are adolescents who are currently preparing for life and work in the outside world, who thus require the necessary skills and information to do so successfully.

3.4.2 Selection of participants and selection criteria

Sample selection in qualitative research is usually (but not always), “non-random, purposeful, and small” (Merriam, 1998:8). It entails decisions about, “which people, settings, events, behaviours and/or social processes to observe” (Durrheim, 2000, as cited in Perry, 2010:42). According to Cohen, et al. (2007), there is little benefit to seeking a random sample when most of the random sample may be largely ignorant of particular issues and unable to comment on matters of interest to the researcher, in which case a purposive sample is vital. “The concern is to acquire in-depth information from those who are in a position to give it” (Cohen et al., 2007:134). Due to this, purposive sampling was chosen as the method for participant selection in this study.

According to Merriam (2009), to begin purposive sampling, one must first determine what selection criteria are essential for choosing the people or sites to be studied. In criterion-based selection, “the researcher creates a list of the attributes essential in his/her study and then proceeds to find or locate a unit matching the list” (Merriam, 2009:77). The selection criteria used to determine the sample for this study were as follows:

- Context

A private school institution situated in a middle to high socio-economic context; and a public school institution situated in a low socio-economic context – both contexts catering to learners from differing social, cultural and socio-economic environments.

- Position

Participants were required to be employed as Life Orientation educators, principals, or heads of the Life Orientation department within their relative school context.

- Age-group

Participants were required to be working within the Further Education and Training (FET) band, i.e. overseeing learners aged 15-19 years (adolescents preparing for life and work in the outside world).

The great danger of this type of selection, according to Bless and Higson-Smith (2000; 2004:92), is that, “it relies more heavily on the subjective considerations of the researcher than on objective criteria” and, in addition, it, “does not estimate the representativeness of a sample correctly” (Perry 2010:42). In order to address the criticisms and potential challenges of using criterion-based selection, the rationale for selecting the case and its participants were carefully considered. Placing particular focus on the goals of the study and the framework within which the researcher was working, two schools were required, one private and one public, both offering Life Orientation as a subject area in the FET phase, to allow for comparisons to be drawn with regards to curriculum implementation across contexts within the Western Cape.

3.4.3 Selection Procedures

Various institutions were emailed requesting permission to conduct research in their school. On provision of the research proposal, informed consent was obtained and permission was granted by the principals of a private and a public school respectively (meeting the sampling and selection criteria discussed in sections 1.6.2 and 3.4.2). Permission was also granted by the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) – see consent form in Addendum B. Communication was then initiated via email with the Life Orientation staff via the respective Heads of Department (HODs), and their role in the data collection process was explained,

along with the purpose of the research. Informed consent was obtained and initial meetings were set up in order to provide the participants with the self-administered questionnaires and attached consent forms. A date was decided on for the return of the questionnaires and forms, and a time scheduled for the focus group interview with the teachers as well as the in-depth individual interviews with the principals and heads of Life Orientation of each respective school. Voluntary participation of all participants was emphasised throughout the data collection process. This ethical consideration is discussed in further detail in section 3.7.

3.4.4 Data collection methods

The interpretivist framework, as well as the qualitative nature of this study, informed the data collection processes used. These were in-depth semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, and self-administered questionnaires. Using different methods to collect data ensured that sufficient information was obtained with regards to Life Orientation teachers' experiences of context and curriculum implementation in private and public schools, respectively, in the Western Cape.

3.4.4.1 Interviews

An interview, as defined by Bless & Higson-Smith (2000; 2004:104), “involves *direct* personal contact with the participant”.

Non-scheduled, semi-structured interviews were selected for this study (see Addenda E and F), which are structured in the sense that, “a list of topics and questions are drawn up prior to the interview”, but are non-scheduled in the sense that, “the interviewer is free to formulate other questions as judged appropriate for a given situation” (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000; 2004:105). This method of data collection is well-suited to the basic, qualitative research design within the interpretivist framework (as discussed in section 3.3), as it entails direct interaction with the participants of the study, allowing for in-depth exploration of the research topic through open-ended and flexible questioning techniques, thus allowing the researcher to “[learn] how individuals experience and interact with their social world” (Merriam, 2002:4).

3.4.4.2 Focus group interviews

“[Focus group interviews] are useful where a group of people have been working together for some time or common purpose, or where it is seen as important that *everyone concerned is aware of what others in the group are saying*” (Cohen, et al., 2007:392). Focus groups are a form of group interview, though not in the sense of a backwards and forwards between interviewer and group. Rather, “the reliance is on the interaction within the group who discuss a topic supplied by the researcher” (Cohen, et al., 2007:395), yielding a collective rather than individual view. Hence, the participants interact with each other rather than with the interviewer, so that the views of the participants can emerge – “the participants’ rather than the researcher’s agenda can predominate” (Cohen, et al., 2007:395). This method of data collection is well-suited to the study, as it allows for the subjective experiences of the participants to emerge where, “the actor’s perspective (the ‘insider’ or ‘emic’ view) is emphasised”, making use of the researcher as the “main instrument” in the research process (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:270). The contrived nature of these interviews is both their strength and their weakness: they are unnatural settings yet they are very focused on a particular issue and, therefore, will yield insights that might not otherwise have been available in a straight-forward interview (Cohen et al., 2007). In this study the focus group interviews consisted of semi-structured questions from an interview guide (see Addendum G), used to obtain in-depth information from teachers about their experiences of their context and the impact this has on their implementation of the Life Orientation curriculum. Although these interviews are economical in the sense that they produce a large amount of data in a short period of time, they tend to produce less data than interviews with the same number of individuals on a one-to-one basis would (Cohen et al., 2007:395). In an attempt to address this potential shortcoming, many of the questions from the self-administered questionnaires (discussed in the next section) were expanded upon in the focus groups. “Due to the fact that a self-administered questionnaire can be exploratory in nature, it can serve as a starting point for other methodologies” (Harris & Brown, 2010:2). Thus both interviews and questionnaires are an important means of obtaining direct responses from participants about their understandings, conceptions, beliefs, and attitudes (Harris & Brown, 2010).

3.4.4.3 Self-administered questionnaires

In keeping with the interpretivist methodology, participants were provided with an opportunity to describe their experiences and perceptions of context in their implementation of the Life Orientation curriculum through the completion of an open-ended questionnaire (see Addendum H). Open-ended questions, “enable participants to write a free account in their own terms, to explain and qualify their responses and avoid the limitations of pre-set categories of response” (Cohen et al, 2007:340). In addition, they allow time for reflection on the part of the participant, who is not under the same time response pressure as when in an individual or group interview. It is important to note that the questionnaire will always be an intrusion into the life of the respondent, be it in terms of time taken to complete, the level of threat or sensitivity of the questions, or the possible invasion of privacy (Cohen et al., 2007). Questionnaire respondents are not passive data providers for researchers, “they are subjects not objects of research” (Cohen et al., 2007:336). This once again emphasises the actor’s perspective (the ‘insider’ or ‘emic’ view) (Babbie & Mouton, 2001), highlighting the paradigmatic framework upon which this study is based.

3.4.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis is described by Thomas et al. (2005, as cited in Perry, 2010:49) as, “the process of making sense out of data”. In keeping with the, “fluid, flexible and non-sequential nature of qualitative design” (Durrheim, 2006; Pope, Ziebland & Mays, 2006, as cited in Perry 2010:49), various phases of data analysis were revisited in order to deepen, clarify, and adjust the researcher’s understanding of the emerging data. The phases of data analysis were conducted within the descriptive and interpretivist framework and design.

The data analysis began with the *preparatory phase* (Patton, 2002), in which data was organised, protected, and familiarised with. In-depth interviews were recorded on a portable voice recorder, and transcribed electronically, directly onto a laptop, where they were saved in a private and confidential folder. Through the process of transcribing the interviews, the researcher was able to familiarise herself with the data.

After this, the *descriptive phase* (Patton, 2002) of the data analysis process was entered. According to Patton (2002:50), the descriptive phase of data analysis entails, “the classification and coding of data”. During this phase the researcher engages in thematic analysis, which has the aim of, “searching for aggregated themes within data” (Gibson & Brown, 2009:127, as cited in Perry, 2010:52). The search for themes within the data was begun by reading and re-reading the researchers’ transcripts as well as field notes, in an attempt to locate commonalities, which ultimately emerged as themes. These themes were each assigned a colour and, through the process of grouping color-coded data, sub-themes began to emerge. Once categorised, the data could be interpreted. An example of the coding process can be found in Addendum I. Thomas et al. (2005, as cited in Perry, 2010:52) describe qualitative interpretation as merging data, “into a holistic portrayal of the phenomenon” in order to find both meaning and significance. This is known as the *interpretive phase* (Patton, 2002). “Interpretation is a complex and dynamic craft, with as much creative artistry as technical exactitude and it requires an abundance of patient plodding, fortitude, and discipline” (Schutt, 2011c:323).

The process of data analysis is not linear in nature, it is a cyclical process in which the researcher moves between phases, categorising and re-categorising, interpreting and re-interpreting, remaining emerged in the raw data at all times. “There are many changing rhythms; multiple steps; moments of jubilation, revelation, and exasperation” (Schutt, 2011c:323) and with this complex and somewhat subjective interpretation comes the drawing of results and conclusions. A great deal of attention is thus applied to reliability and validity in all research methods through the verification of emergent data (Morse, Barret, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002).

3.5 DATA VERIFICATION

Verification is the process of checking, confirming, making sure, and being certain (Morse, Barret, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002). In qualitative research, verification refers to the, “mechanisms used during the process of research to incrementally contribute to ensuring reliability and validity and, thus, the rigor of a study” (Morse et. al., 2002:9). In seminal work in the 1980s, Guba and Lincoln (as cited in Shenton, 2004:64) substituted reliability and validity with the parallel concept of “trustworthiness”, containing four aspects:

- a) Credibility (in preference to internal validity);
- b) Transferability (in preference to external validity/generalizability);
- c) Dependability (in preference to reliability); and
- d) Confirmability (in preference to objectivity).

These aspects will be discussed in more detail below.

3.5.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to the believability of the findings and is enhanced by evidence such as, “confirming evaluation of conclusions by research participants, convergence of multiple sources of evidence, control of unwanted influences and theoretical fit” (Schutt, 2011c:363). In order to ensure the credibility of the study, the researcher engaged in peer examination – allowing for conclusions to be evaluated by an external party – as well as the auditing and triangulation of data, which allowed for the convergence of three sources of data (tabulated and appended) for enhanced credibility of the research study. These data verification strategies will be discussed in more detail in section 3.6.

3.5.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to, “evidence supporting the generalization of findings to other contexts – across different participants, groups, situations, and so forth” (Schutt, 2011c:363). Generalisation in this sense refers to the, “extent to which the interpretive account can be applied to other contexts than the one being researched” (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:431). Because of the contextual nature of interpretive research, there are usually strong limits to the generalizability of the research findings. Although the findings of this study may not be generalizable, they are transferable in the sense that they may inform further study on the topic, using different research designs. In an attempt to enhance the generalizability and transferability of the study, thick descriptions of the findings have been provided, as well as of the research design.

3.5.3 Dependability

To check the dependability of a qualitative study, one must look to see if the researcher has been careless or made mistakes in conceptualising the study, collecting the data, interpreting the findings, and reporting the results (Williams, 2011). A recommended verification strategy is leaving an *audit trail*, such as reflective notes and commentary as well as raw data and reports detailing the research process. If the researcher does not maintain any kind of audit trail, the dependability cannot be assessed and the dependability and trustworthiness of the study are diminished (Williams, 2011).

“In order to address the dependability issue more directly, the processes within the study should be reported in detail, thereby enabling a future researcher to repeat the work, if not necessarily to gain the same results...Such in-depth coverage also allows the reader to assess the extent to which proper research practices have been followed” (Shenton, 2004:71).

The issue of dependability was addressed in this particular research study through the provision of raw data – such as original transcripts and data analysis tables (see Addenda I and J) – as well as reflective notes (see chapter 5).

3.5.4 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to objectivity (neutrality) and the control of researcher bias. Bias in qualitative research is an ever-present concern, but unbiased interpretations are more likely once the researcher’s self-reflection recognises them overtly and factors them into the design (Schutt, 2011b). In this research a reflective report was used (see discussion in section 5.8), as well as various data verification strategies, such as peer review (through supervisor input and discussion), and data triangulation (by using various data collection techniques) in order to enhance the confirmability of the study.

3.6 DATA VERIFICATION STRATEGIES

3.6.1 Triangulation

The truthfulness of the results can be verified by applying the procedure called triangulation (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). The basic idea underpinning the concept of triangulation is that the phenomenon under study can be understood best when approached with a variety or combination of research methods (Given, 2013). Triangulation is a powerful strategy for enhancing the quality of research, particularly credibility (Krefting, 1991). There are a number of different ways that one can triangulate data, either through the use of several researchers or evaluators (investigator triangulation), through the use of multiple perspectives (theory triangulation), or using multiple methods to study a single problem (methodological triangulation) (Given, 2013). In this study use was made of the latter form, using a number of different sources/methods as convergent evidence, namely in-depth interviews, focus group interviews, and self-administered questionnaires, in order to support findings.

3.6.2 Audit Trail

“Unless the researcher leaves a trail and describes in detail what is done, the reader is left at the mercy of the researcher’s ability to smooth over the cracks.”

(Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:427).

Guba uses the term ‘auditable’ to describe the situation in which another researcher can clearly follow the decision trail used by an investigator in a study (Krefting, 1991:21). This enables the reader to, “trace through the researcher’s logic and determine whether the study’s findings may be relied upon as a platform for further enquiry” (Carcary, 2009:11). The audit trail of this study includes interviews and ‘raw materials’, such as interview schedules and consent forms (included in Addenda B-F), as well as a detailed account of the data collection and analysis process in chapters 3 and 4 of this study, and personal reflections detailed in chapter 5. Furthermore, data is presented in the forms of tables and quotations, which are complemented by the attached addenda (see Addenda I and J). In doing so, “this lets the reader into our confidence, by reporting not only the final resolution, but also the route we followed on the way there” (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:427).

3.6.3 Peer Examination

This strategy of data verification involves the researcher discussing the research process and findings with impartial colleagues who have experience with qualitative methods (Krefting, 1991). These colleagues or research supervisors are asked to, “scan some of the raw data and assess whether the findings are plausible based on the data” (Merriam, 2009:220). This research study forms part of a master’s thesis component, so supervisor input and review by external examiners are inherent in this process. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985, as cited in Krefting, 1991:219), this is one way of, “keeping the researcher honest”, and the searching questions may contribute to deeper reflexive analysis.

3.6.4 Reflexivity

One tradition that has become a standard in qualitative research is that of, “making one’s implicit assumptions and biases overt to self and others” (Morrow, 2005:254). This verification strategy is known as reflexivity, and one of the most important ways in which to carry this out is to keep a self-reflective journal from the inception to the completion of the investigation. Another reflexive strategy is consulting with a research team or peer debriefers (Hill et al., 2005; Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997; Morrow & Smith, 2000, as cited in Morrow, 2005:254) who, “serve as a mirror, reflecting the investigator’s responses to the research process”. As mentioned above, in this instance the thesis supervisor played an important role in the reflective and debriefing process of the research study; as did the reflective commentary, found in section 5.8 of this study.

3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Whatever the specific nature of their work, “social researchers must take into account the effects of the research on participants, and act in such a way as to preserve their dignity as human beings” (Cohen, et al., 2007:77). As such, a number of ethical considerations were made during the course of this research study. These considerations are detailed in the following sections.

3.7.1 Privacy, confidentiality, anonymity

“Participation in research must be voluntary and people can refuse to divulge certain information about themselves” (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000; 2004:100). This right to privacy demands that direct consent from adults must be obtained; and moreover, that this consent be informed. Informed consent refers to ensuring participants’ awareness of the purpose of the research, as well as any positive or negative consequences of participation (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000; 2004). As part of the methodology of this study, i.e. the strategy or plan of action, consent was first obtained from the principals of the respective participating schools and, after meeting with the respective participants and explaining the purpose of the research and what would be expected of them, informed consent was obtained from the participants themselves.

An advantage of self-administered questionnaires is that they ensure the anonymity of the participant. “The essence of anonymity is that information provided by participants should in no way reveal their identity” (Cohen et al, 2007:83). Thus, a respondent completing a questionnaire that bears absolutely no identifying marks – names, addresses, occupational details or coding symbols – is ensured complete and total anonymity. A subject agreeing to a face-to-face interview, on the other hand, can in no way expect anonymity. At most, the interviewer can promise confidentiality (Cohen et al, 2007). Cooper and Schindler (2001 as cited in Cohen et al. 2007:84) suggest that confidentiality can be protected by, “obtaining signed statements indicating non-disclosure of the research, restricting access to data which identify respondents, seeking the approval of the respondents before any disclosure about respondents takes place, and non-disclosure of data (e.g. subsets that may be able to be combined to identify an individual)”. Further ways of achieving anonymity have been listed by Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1992, as cited in Cohen et al, 2007:83), for example, “the use of aliases, the use of codes for identifying people (to keep the information on individuals separate from access to them) and the use of password-protected files”. All data gathered during this research process was kept in a password-protected computer and coded for further preservation of anonymity. In addition, all hard-copies were locked in a filing cabinet, accessible only to the researcher.

3.7.2 Respect and Trust

Mouton (1996:158) states that, “the advantage of a strong interpersonal relationship between researcher and participant is that it neutralises initial distrust”. In order to gain the trust of participants, the researcher tried to establish the best possible rapport and interpersonal relationship with each of them. Obviously due to time constraints only a limited time was available to do so, however, a greater sense of comfort and trust was experienced from the participants after initial rapport was established.

3.7.3 Voluntariness

Adult participants must provide consent on a voluntary basis and with complete information concerning the nature and consequences of participation (Drew, 2007). Voluntary consent is concerned with each individual’s ability to, “exercise the power of choice without the intervention of force, fraud, deceit, duress, or other forms of constraint or coercion” (Drew, 2007:58). Participation in this research study was wholly voluntary, and consent was obtained freely without coercion or force.

3.7.4 Harm

Participants in a research study have the right to be informed about the likely risks involved in the research and of any potential consequences (Drew, 2007). This again reiterates their right to give informed consent before participating in the research process. The most basic concern of all research is that no individual is harmed by serving as a participant, as suggested by the APA and AERA codes of ethics (Drew, 2007:64). The participants in this research study were not considered to be a ‘vulnerable’ population by the REC, and steps towards ensuring confidentiality as well as privacy (conducting interviews in private spaces) were conducted by the researcher throughout the research process.

The ethical steps followed by the researcher in this study are as follows:

- Applied for permission from schools and principals;
- Applied for permission from the WCED;

- Applied for ethical clearance by the REC [REC-050411-032];
- Took extreme care to protect interviewees;
- A letter accompanied questionnaires assuring confidentiality and voluntary participation;
- Interviews started with an assurance of confidentiality and protection of the institution;
- Permission to record the interviews was obtained; and
- Interviews were then transcribed, read, and signed by the respondents as a token of agreement with the content.

3.8 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the researcher explained the research paradigm and design, and the processes used to collect data in order to answer the research questions for this basic qualitative study. An interpretivist paradigm was selected as the grounding for the basic qualitative research design in order to explore teacher's subjective experiences of the implementation of the LO curriculum in their specific context – ultimately informing the research questions posed in chapter one of the research study. The research methodology was explained, data verification issues and strategies were discussed, as well as the ethical considerations that were made during the process of this research study. Chapter 4 will concentrate on the findings of the research and the interpretation and analysis of the collected data.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this basic descriptive qualitative study was to explore the experiences of Life Orientation teachers with regards to their context, and the influence that this has on their delivery and implementation of the current curriculum. The intention of the researcher was to obtain information from comparative contexts, namely a public and a private school respectively in the Western Cape, so that relevant recommendations can be made with regards to this particular subject in South African schools. This chapter is concerned with presenting and discussing the findings of this study, according to the main themes that emerged. A conclusion is presented at the end of the chapter in order to sum up the analysis and the emergent findings.

4.2 PARTICIPANTS, SETTING AND PROCEDURE

As discussed in section 1.6.2 and section 3.4.2, the participants were purposefully selected from a public, and a private school in the Western Cape. They were selected according to criteria which required participants to be Life Orientation teachers who were currently teaching in a high school (FET phase); as well as the Life Orientation Heads of Department (HODs), and principals of the respective schools. The data gathering tools that were utilised in this study included self-administered questionnaires, which were completed by the teachers and heads of department (HODs); two focus group interviews (one per school); and four individual interviews (two per school, namely a Life Orientation HOD/educator and the school principal). The heads of department also participated in the focus groups. The purpose of the separate individual interviews was to gather in-depth information about the context of each school and the nature of the Life Orientation curriculum being delivered by the educators.

Table 4.1 provides the reader with a summary of the relevant school contexts in which the research participants teach Life Orientation. This biographical data was collected in the self-administered questionnaires and is tabulated below.

Table 4.1: Summary of school contexts

Context	Language of teaching	Language of learners	Religion of the learners	Number of learners	Number of LO teachers	SES
Context A	Afrikaans and some English	Afrikaans	Christian and Muslim	±300	5	Low
Context B	English	English	Majority Jewish	±300	6	Middle to high

The purpose of the questionnaires (not completed by the principals) was to obtain demographical and biographical data. The demographical data focused on providing a perception of the participating teachers' years of experience in teaching Life Orientation, years of experience in education in general, and the personal context/environment in which they live. The biographical data is presented with the aim of providing the reader with an understanding of the participants' personal experiences with regard to implementing the Life Orientation curriculum in the context in which their school is based, their personal opinions with regards to the Life Orientation curriculum, and the skills that their learners require. The questionnaires were completed in the teachers' own time before the focus group and individual interviews took place.

All the data from the individual and focus group interviews were gathered in a private space at the participants' respective schools. The intention was to ensure that the interviews could be conducted privately and away from potential distractions and threats to confidentiality. In order to maintain ethical responsibility towards the participants and protect their anonymity and privacy, all names were replaced with a code indicated with a 'P' (for participant), followed by a number. For example, P1^A refers to participant one in context A, P2^B refers to participant 2 in context B, and so on. The principals are referred to as PA and PB

respectively, A and B subscripts indicating their contexts, as with each participant. In each interview transcript the researcher is referred to by means of the letter 'R', for researcher. In addition to the above, to further protect the anonymity of the participants as well as the school, any information in the research data that was deemed as ethically threatening, was either deleted from the data or, if deemed appropriate, deleted and then replaced with a pseudonym and a descriptive term that was encased in square brackets. For example, 'Mr. Jones' was replaced with '[teacher]' to illustrate a participant's reference to a particular teacher at the school.

Tables 4.2 and 4.3 below present the demographic information of the participating teachers in context A and context B respectively.

Table 4.2 Demographic information representing Context A participants

Context A	Position of participant	Code of participant	Number of years teaching	No. of years teaching LO	Age	Gender	Home Language of participant
	Life Orientation Educator	P1 ^A	4	4	26	F	Afrikaans
	Life Orientation HOD	P2 ^A	32	20	52	F	Afrikaans
	Life Orientation Educator	P3 ^A	18	15	47	F	Afrikaans
	Life Orientation Educator	P4 ^A	24	3	47	M	Afrikaans
	Life Orientation Educator	*P5 ^A	2.7	2.7	26	F	Afrikaans/ English

*did not attend focus group

Table 4.3 Demographic information representing context B participants

Context B	Position of Participant	Code of participant	Number of years teaching	No. of years teaching LO	Age	Gender	Home language of participant
	Life Orientation HOD (senior high school)	P1 ^B	15	8	46	F	English
	Life Orientation HOD (junior high school)	P2 ^B	10	10	35	F	Afrikaans
	Life Orientation Educator	P3 ^B	**	**	**	F	English
	Life Orientation Educator	P4 ^B	14	3	40	M	English, Spanish, Shona
	Life Orientation Educator	P5 ^B	10 months	10 months	33	M	English

** Information not provided

4.3 PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

In this section, the researcher aims to report on the experiences and perceptions of the participants that emerged from the in-depth focus group and individual interviews during the data collection process. The research findings will be presented according to the categories and themes illustrated in table 4.4 below.

Table 4.4: Tabulated presentation of categories and themes

CATEGORY	THEME	SUBTHEMES
Perceptions of context	Descriptions of the contexts of the schools by the relevant principals.	
	Teachers' perceptions with regard to the context of the learners.	Cultural Socio-economic/political Social Technological
Teachers' perceptions with regard to the learners' needs within their specific contexts.	Life skills/needs Career needs Needs of the specific societies	
The LO CAPS curriculum within the specific contexts.	Implementation	Content and design Adaptability and flexibility
The role of the LO teacher.	Personality traits	
	Skills and needs of LO teacher	
	Training	Departmental Specialised Tertiary

Each category will be subsequently discussed according to the themes/subthemes. Comparisons between the contexts will be made within the discussion of the categories.

4.3.1 Perceptions of context

Context, as discussed in section 2.3 of this research study, is essentially a situation defined through, “interactions in and with the world that are themselves historically situated and culturally idiosyncratic” (Luckin, et al., 2010:4). These interactions are mediated through the

delivery of the curriculum. Because context is so strongly correlated with history (politics) and culture, as described by Luckin, et al. (2010), and because South Africa is such a culturally diverse and historically rich country, a number of challenges emerged in the implementation of the Life Orientation curriculum.

Before presenting the research findings, it is important to provide the reader with a more in-depth description of the contexts of the two participating schools (overview provided in table 4.1). For the purpose of anonymity, the first school will be referred to as *Context A* and the second as *Context B*.

4.3.1.1 *Descriptions of the contexts of the schools by the relevant principals*

Context A was described by the principal (PA) of the school as a school of skills, a public school based in an area where there are ‘high levels of poverty’. This is a school that has been converted from a primary school into a practical skills school, offering metal work, needlework, and mixed farming, amongst others. Due to the socio-economic context in which this school is based, the infrastructure and resources are ‘limited’, resulting in the perpetuation of the ‘Cape Flats Syndrome’, where learners come out of closely spaced flats into a classroom where ‘they are jam-packed’. Eksteen (2009 [abstract]) describes a school of skills as a special school, “[catering] for intellectually mildly disabled learners (IMD learners) who are characterised by their poor scholastic abilities in reading, writing and arithmetic skills, low self-esteem, poor self-concept, lack of motivation to study and their inability to cope with academically orientated work”.

The principal of context B (PB) described her school as a ‘well-resourced’, ‘independent’ school. It is a community school ‘funded to a fair level by the Jewish community of Cape Town’ and its main purpose is ensuring that ‘no Jewish child would ever be turned away because of financial constraints’. Despite the fact that this school has learners from ‘across the economic spectrum’, ‘the social levels are very similar’ as the community ensures that all its members are provided with homes and resources in order to ensure a middle to high standard of living (economically speaking). This is an inclusive school, catering for children of varied academic abilities, where there are a ‘lot of educational challenges’ as well as ‘barriers to learning’.

The two contexts presented in this study are similar in that they cater for learners with varied needs and abilities; however, they differ quite dramatically in terms of their social and economic status. It is for this reason that these contexts were selected as the sites for the data collection to take place. The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences that teachers have with regards to their diverse contexts in their implementation of the Life Orientation curriculum. As this subject in particular deals mainly with social and cultural issues, with less emphasis on academic ability, it was deemed the most relevant focus for this research study.

4.3.1.2 *Teachers' perceptions with regard to the context of the learners*

In reference to a learner, a context is a situation defined through interactions in and with the world within which they are historically situated and culturally idiosyncratic (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986, as cited in Gillespie, 2002) and, as mentioned in chapter 2 (section 2.3), these interactions are conveyed through a developed curriculum that is delivered by the teacher in the classroom.

With regard to the teachers' perceptions of the learners' contexts, a number of subthemes emerged from the data, representing the various factors that directly influence context, namely cultural, socio-economic/political, social, and technological. These are discussed in greater detail below.

- **Cultural factors**

Without an understanding of how culture, experience, readiness, and context influence how people grow, learn, and develop, it is difficult for teachers to make good judgements about how to deal with specific events in the classroom (Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000:525). According to Boles and Kelly (2009:1), teachers need to choose and adapt content, instructional materials, and evaluation instruments to reflect and respond to the rich and complex diversity of the students they teach.

It is evident from their responses that the participants in this study were aware of their learners' specific cultural needs:

<p>P4^A: <i>Gangsterism is rife here; learners grow up needing to protect themselves, so they will get involved in the gangs, so you must focus on what the context of that specific area is.</i></p>
--

P3^A: *Here the value systems are not in place, so that means you have to go out, help these learners build a value system for themselves.*

P1^B: *These kids are very middle class, they're very sheltered, they're very isolated – so I try to expose them to as much as [is] happening out there as possible and to encourage [a] kind of motivation towards addressing social, political issues.*

P4^B: *The children come from well-informed families, they know their rights very well and they express them ... the things that I need to focus on now are different from all other contexts because I've got children that think they know everything – they've got everything, they don't need to be taught how to make money in their life or they don't need to be taught how to work hard so that they can get a job because they already know that their parents are coming from that background.*

Despite this awareness, however, it is evident that the cultural background of the learners in these two contexts are rather different – partly a result of the socio-economic gap that exists between these two contexts, which is tied to political and social inequality (discussed in the following section).

According to participants from both contexts, learners' contextual needs are in fact not being met.

P4^A: *I really don't feel that Life Orientation addresses all the skills that are necessary for the learners to cope within the context where they [are] ”.*

P^A: *[The teachers] will never be able to give Life Orientation because they don't come from these areas. They don't have an experience of gang violence, the trauma that these children have been through; they've not experienced those type of things.*

This informs the research question which looks at whether the current curriculum content does in fact cater for learners' specific contextual needs.

- **Socio-economic/political factors**

South Africa not only has diversity in culture, but also in socio-economic standards. There are a number of reasons for the large economic gap between the upper/middle class and the

lower/working class, including political factors. The hierarchical structure of society, including access to wealth, prestige and power, was constructed to be on the basis of race through decades and even centuries of institutionalised inequality (Taylor & Yu, 2009) and this socio-economic gap has a direct impact on education. Infrastructure, resources, training, and access to technology are only a few areas affected by socio-economic factors.

According to the participants from context A:

P2^A: *I neglected the physical education side [of Life Orientation] because of not having the facilities and not having equipment.*

P3^A: *We didn't have the equipment either [for physical education] so you had to find your own resources which took a lot of time.*

P^A: *You have limited resources ... look you have two workshops but the workshops don't run optimally because now you find that the power's kicking out ... because the infrastructure, it's not just about putting up buildings, it's the power cables that's running through here, they're so old.*

P^A: *You're servicing a community where the community itself is trying to recover ... or just survive another day after there was a night of gang violence.*

Comparatively, the participants from context B had this to say:

P^B: *As an independent school [our school] is well-resourced; the economic context is not that much of a challenge to the teachers.*

P5^B: *They all, most of them [the learners], have access to technology and to different forms of technology – probably more so than most other schools ... being so fortunate at a school like this with amazing facilities and you know, and good teachers and committed teachers.*

These responses inform the research question which looks at how equipped the teachers feel to teach Life Orientation in their specific contexts: participants in context A, who are teaching in a lower socio-economic climate appear to feel less equipped with regards to external resources, thus impacting directly on their implementation of Life Orientation. Resources and infrastructure are mentioned as two major factors influencing the delivery of the curriculum, both of which result from socio-economic and political challenges.

- **Social factors**

Social factors play a large role in the acquisition of skills and knowledge. Similar to cultural factors, social factors are also context specific and, as a result, “schools are created to serve the interests of the [particular] society” (Eisner as cited in Gultig, et al., 2008:120). This is done through the delivery of the curriculum. If the needs of students and society are not met, the curriculum becomes irrelevant (Primrose & Alexander, 2013).

Participants from both contexts shared their personal experiences about the content and delivery of the Life Orientation curriculum – particularly with respect to the social context within which their learners live:

P4^A: *I will focus more on substance abuse and also the early part of learners getting involved in sexual activities because here it is really at a very young age that the learners are sexually active; the kids need to know what is really going on, why is gangsterism so rife here, what is the causes of it, how can we prevent it.*

P1^B: *I’m going to go specifically into for example eating disorders or substance abuse, you know, that are relevant to their contexts.*

From these two responses, it became evident to the researcher that differences in social context affect the nature of the Life Orientation subject matter. Participants are aware that certain skills and knowledge need to be imparted to their particular learners in order to ensure optimal development. Participants in context A emphasised the need for content focused on gangsterism and sexual health:

P^A: *It is important to learn how to deal with your anger because everybody in this area or around here deals with their anger with a knife or a gun.*

Those in context B expressed a need for more in-depth focus on healthy behaviours (such as eating and exercise), as well as the safe and appropriate use of social media:

P1^B: *I’d like to look at probably social media, but in depth.*

From these responses, one can identify some common themes emerging from the two contexts, particularly the need for sexuality education and substance abuse awareness, suggesting that certain social issues are adolescent rather than context specific. This ties in with Rooth’s study (2005:2-3), where she found that South African adolescents in particular

are demonstrating increased rates of drug and alcohol experimentation, sexual activity, delinquency, suicide attempts, anti-social activities, physical aggression, and fighting.

However, there are also clear differences in what material the participants believe should be delivered to their learners in their specific context. This may require, as Kundu (2011:3) believes, 'readjustments in the curriculum', informing the research question: To what extent are the learning outcomes of the Life Orientation curriculum context-appropriate?

One does, however, need to remain aware of teachers' personal biases and stereotypes:

P4^A: *If you look at the Western Cape specifically, you will get amongst the black group where AIDS is something that needs to be taught, they need to know exactly why and what and how ... If you look at the coloured community, you will focus more on gangsterism and getting involved in the drug trade, when you look at the white group you will have more sexual orientation also and the drugs – that is the two big focus areas there.*

- **Technological factors**

It is the role of the teacher to adapt learning content to not only prepare learners for life in their immediate communities, but life in the global economy as well – ensuring that indigenous needs are met through localised curricula, without deviating too markedly from those offered elsewhere in the world (DoE 1995, as cited in Gultig, e al., 2008:8).

According to the White Paper 4 (1998), research has pointed to a limited conceptual understanding many teachers have of the subjects they teach. This is as a result of both the inequalities and distortions of our apartheid past, as well as the evolution of our modern industrial society (DoE, 1998:13), which has shifted the way in which information is acquired through rapid global technological advancement.

The participants in both contexts demonstrate an awareness of the importance of technology in education, yet the majority seem to be dissatisfied with the global preparedness of their learners.

Although the educators in context B have access to more resources, they are still experiencing a lack of computer literacy amongst their learners:

P5^B: *I think we were all quite surprised at how superficial [the learners'] use of technology is [group agrees] ... they easily negotiate their way around keyboards and screens and all of that but as soon as we delved a little bit deeper, we actually realised that they use it very superficially.*

On the other hand educators in context A are themselves unequipped and under-resourced and thus find it difficult to provide their learners with this skill:

P4^A: *Some of our teachers are still a bit scared of the computers so the learners, they just see the computer and internet as a resource to download, and download movies, music, stuff like that ... Whereas in New Zealand, you will have the whole curriculum planned and set out on their systems that they have, but then their resources are much better than what ours are.*

Despite the differences in the nature of their challenges, participants from both contexts are affected by technological factors, ultimately impacting on learner preparedness for the global economy – a skill that is required to be imparted through the Life Orientation subject area in South African schools.

4.3.2 Teachers' perceptions with regard to the learners' needs within their specific contexts

Barhardt's (1981; 2006:4) concept of "cultural eclecticism", refers to the school's contribution to the development of an integrated cultural perspective suitable to the student's needs and circumstances. In accordance with the research findings, the participants perceive their learners' needs and circumstances as being context-specific. These needs have been identified as specific life and career skills – skills that involve the development of particular knowledge, morals, values, and principals which will allow for optimal functioning in their particular cultural and social contexts. This is supported by the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) of 2002, which states that the purpose of LO is to, "equip learners with the skills, knowledge, attitudes and values (SKAV) to face life's challenges in an informed, confident and responsible way" (DoE, 1997 as cited in van Deventer, 2009:128). The following skills were identified:

4.3.2.1 Life skills/needs

In view of growing concern over the erosion of essential values and increasing cynicism in society, readjustments in the curriculum need to be carried out so that, “education becomes a forceful tool for the cultivation of social and moral values” (Kundu, 2011:3-4). This may require these skills to be integrated (from the ‘hidden curriculum’) into the ‘formal curriculum’, where they become part of the content, outcomes, methods, and assessment (Väyrynen, 2003:6). According to Väyrynen (2003:6) the ‘hidden curriculum’ is about values, principles, and practices that learners are supposed to follow or learn intuitively. These can also be referred to as life skills because without the development of social and moral values, optimal functioning in any context will not be possible.

According to the participants, the following life skills are not being met by the current Life Orientation curriculum:

P5^B: ... *real communication, real, verbal, face-to-face communication and also self-introspection as well – sort of looking at themselves and their context and trying to get a clearer picture of who they are and what they stand for and their values.*

P^B: *I don’t think that they’ve always been taught about courtesy.*

P1^A: *Respect is very, very important ... these children need to know the basic values that we have, like greeting.*

P3^A: *Morals and values, you have to go deeper into that ... it’s not a learning outcome, not at the moment. So we need to like really put it in there.*

P4^A: *I have taught the gay and the straight group so I always ask them to tolerate and to not discriminate ... I always taught them how to respect the elderly because some of them are brought up nowadays without any respect for those who are older than what they are.*

Despite the social, cultural, and economic gap, both contexts appear to be affected by this ‘value erosion’ – suggesting that the erosion of social values is not a contextualised phenomenon, but rather a national one. According to Du Plessis, Lundy and Swanepoel (2000:68), “disadvantaged communities need to be developed economically, socially and morally”. These findings need to be extended to socio-economically advantaged communities, as it is evident that participants from context B experience similar moral

deprivation as well as specific social issues. The teaching of values should thus be implemented throughout the (formal) curriculum, across contexts (see recommendations in chapter 5).

4.3.2.2 Career needs

The role of the school is to maintain the status quo: if the society needs more engineers, doctors, physicists, or skilled blue collar workers, the school is regarded as the agency through which they will be provided (Eisner, 1985 as cited in Gultig, et al., 2008:121). But the question is to what extent schools provide for these needs.

The participants from both contexts expressed challenges regarding career education and work preparation for their learners; however, the nature of their challenges seems to differ. All of the participants appear to recognise the impact of their learners' socio-economic environment on their career preparation, thus requiring the development of specific skills for their particular context. As P3^A and P1^A mentioned, the learners in their context are not only academically disadvantaged – making it more difficult to enter tertiary institutions – but they are also economically disadvantaged, requiring them to either create their own work, or enter the blue-collar working system where they will be able to earn money to provide for their basic needs.

P1^A: *And especially these children at this school [school of skills].they have no academic side to going for them, so it's definitely different from mainstream covering that topic [career education].*

P3^A: *The unemployment rate is high in this area.*

Alternatively, the learners in context B are faced with the challenge of discovering which career path they would like to take – they have more doors open to them with regards to resources, finances, networks, and support systems.

P^B: *When it comes to their work shadow and how many of them try and get their parents to organise it for them, and how many parents fall into the trap despite the fact that we tell them that they mustn't ... part of their experience is making their own arrangements, but they are, you know, very protected.*

In addition, participants expressed the need for more training in the area of career education as well as more flexibility in curriculum delivery, as they feel unequipped to prepare their learners for careers and work opportunities.

P1^B: *We do a kind of work shadow programme and that's all we do in grade 11 ... but I've been lazy with the career guidance, because I feel totally unequipped to deal with it ... so I can only answer for my group of kids, no, my kids' career guidance education, no, it's not met.*

P3^A: *The child can even start his own business already because he's that age ... but there are four, five topics we have to cover for the term, so I can't go deep into that, I just have to touch on it.*

Responses from the questionnaires yielded additional information.

P4^A described his learners' preparation for careers as 'very limited'. This was echoed by P3^A who experienced the curriculum as providing very little content to cover career opportunities for the learners, and none for learners at a school of skills.

P4^B believed that his learners' career needs are 'partially met' while P2^B believes that, although the learners' needs are being met, a more practical side to the teaching of careers is needed.

These responses enlighten the research question which looks at the awareness of the different skills required for life and work in the outside world. Teachers from both contexts appear to be aware of their own as well as their learners' required skills in preparation for work in the outside world. These skills are not, however, being developed, which leads to the question: will modified curriculum content and/or professional teacher development in career guidance and preparation assist in learners' career needs being met? The next section will look at the specific life and career needs of the learners as expressed by the research participants.

4.3.2.3 Specific needs of the two contexts

The specific life and career needs as expressed by the participants differ quite significantly between the two contexts. The following table represents the specific needs of the learners in

context A and context B respectively, according to the responses gathered from the research participants' self-administered questionnaires.

Table 4.5: Specific needs of the two contexts

Context A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parental guidance • Work • Youth counselling • Money • Employment • Education • Housing • Health care • Food • Stationery
Context B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online awareness • Respect • Psychological needs • Career guidance

From the above table it is quite evident that the needs of the different contexts differ quite drastically, and, consequently, so do those of the learners – they require skills to adapt to the cultural and socio-economic environment in which they live. Learners in context A require more basic or 'physiological' needs (Maslow 1943; 1970 as cited in Learning Theories Knowledgebase, 2013) in terms of shelter and food and personal safety. Life Orientation should thus focus on preparing learners to meet these challenges. Alternatively, learners in context B require more 'growth' skills (Maslow 1943; 1970 as cited in Learning Theories Knowledgebase, 2013), where they are motivated not by deficiencies but rather by the desire for personal growth and the need to reach their potential. Again, this results in the need for context-specific curriculum content, informing the research question of the study which aims to identify whether context (socio-economic and cultural) requires adaptation of the (CAPS) Life Orientation curriculum.

4.3.3 The Life Orientation CAPS curriculum within the specific contexts

Life Orientation sets out to prepare learners to be active members of society and of their communities and, “the curriculum content must be applicable to the solution of the problems affecting the society which uses it” (Chikumbu, & Makamure, 2000:18). However, “curriculum development usually does not explicitly address the social context in which learning takes place, nor does it consider the underlying cultural processes by which the content is acquired and utilized” (Barnhardt, 1981; 2006:5). This can lead to a number of curricula challenges, namely with respect to implementation, as well as content and design, and adaptability and flexibility. This was revealed in this study.

4.3.3.1 Implementation of the curriculum

Teachers do not merely deliver the curriculum; they develop, define and reinterpret it as well (Renck Jalongo, 1991:47). This was echoed by P1^B and P^B:

P1^B: *I don't deliver the curriculum ... we've constructed our own grade 10 programme, constructed our own grade 11 programme.*

P^B: *[The LO Head] made it her business to put together a syllabus that would answer [the learners'] needs, but at the same time bear a relationship to the syllabus as it's laid down – but she would just take it to greater heights.*

In their study, Koga and Hall (2011:11) believe in the importance of emphasising a, “student-centered approach to education”, and organising lessons relevant to student's lives.

P^B: *If [the LO Head] had been satisfied just to teach the syllabus as it was laid down by the department, I think we would have had even more disaffected kids in those classes than we already have.*

Participants from context B appeared to be more confident in their implementation of the Life Orientation curriculum, suggesting that this student-centered approach to education may require not only training, but resources and infrastructure as well. In addition, it appears from the responses that participants from both contexts are finding it challenging to deliver the Life Orientation curriculum in an inclusive educational setting:

P^B: *If the Life Orientation teachers have got challenges, their challenges are the fact that [this school] is an inclusive school.*

P3^A: *In this context, for these learners, skills learners, I think the topics are ... there are too many topics, they have to narrow it down for the skills learners; for a school of skills we need a different curriculum.*

Through emphasising a student-centered approach to education, and using materials familiar to students from varied cultural backgrounds, Koga and Hall (2004) found curriculum modification to positively affect the students' academic achievements, especially students identified as at-risk for academic failure. This again may require more training for educators, and perhaps a revision of the curricula currently being delivered in the various schools.

Two sub-themes emerged from the data as primary factors affecting curriculum implementation, namely curriculum content and design, and curriculum flexibility and adaptability.

- **Content and design**

An orientation of the curriculum, according to Eisner (1985, as cited in Gultig, et al., 2008:120) is one that “derives its aims and content from an analysis of the society the school is designed to serve”. This is echoed by Lemmer and Badenhorst (as cited in Primrose and Alexander, 2013:57) who believe that curriculum design and development should, “take into account the short-term and long-term needs, interests and potential of those who are to be educated”. As discussed in section 4.3.2, the participants believe that their students have certain needs that should be met by the Life Orientation content in order for them to live optimally and function in their specific contexts and societies. As a result, the curriculum needs to be addressed so that it can, “provide the kinds of programmes that are relevant for meeting the needs that have been identified” (Eisner, 1985, as cited in Gultig, et al., 2008:120). When asked about their experiences of the curriculum, the participants shared a common feeling of frustration and disappointment:

P1^B: *Most of the stuff that's in the textbook is basic common sense. In terms of life, if I was to stick only to the curriculum, the CAPS, no, not relevant to their lives at all. Not at all.*

This response is similar to the findings in Badugela's study (2012:31) where she found that, “the textbooks provided had insufficient information and were therefore not suitable”. A one-size-fits-all curriculum may therefore prove to be irrelevant, as suggested by Primrose and

Alexander (2013), as it is not culturally diversified to meet the needs of the South African society.

P4^A: *It [the curriculum] addresses some of these needs, but then you also need to move away from the curriculum to focus on the context of the area that you're in.*

Common themes that emerged from the participant's responses with regard to curriculum content and design are a lack of time and too much rigidity, affecting the implementation of the Life Orientation curriculum.

P4^A: *It [the curriculum] is too wide and too broad for [the learners], [the department] should actually narrow it down and in fact they should ask us to write the part of the curriculum that we need in our contexts and not, like prescribed in the CAPS, what we need to teach week by week.*

P2^A: *There's too much content to actually do an activity in that space of time ... It's more content-based, and you want to do a role-play but at the end of the day, the books to go in for moderation, they [are] looking at content.*

Barnhardt (1981; 2006:7) believes that the, "subject-matter approach to curriculum content" was resulting in, "static, discrete knowledge and skills in a rapidly changing and expanding social and cultural environment", echoing Budugela's study (2012:30), where she found that "the syllabus content is not always relevant".

P2^A: *What I discovered, life skills ... that child was doing since grade 8 the same things every year ... it's like grade 9 the same thing, grade 10 the same thing ... If the topic stays the same for the different grades I don't have a problem, but the content must be different, it must go further every year, deeper.*

P3^B: *I mean the curriculum designers; I don't think they've put very much thought into it because it's the same topics in grade 7, in grade 8, in grade 9.*

P1^B: *... but the curriculum doesn't allow the scope to maybe do six lessons on eating disorders ... everything's so superficial. That's what it is ... everything's so incredibly superficial.*

P5^B: *We need more; we need something with more meat in it.*

It is interesting to note that much of the frustration around curriculum content and implementation stems from the participants in context A. They appear to be bound by the rigidity of the current CAPS curriculum: “The greater specification in the CAPS may mean prescription of content, pace, sequencing and assessment, and carries the danger that strict adherence will be required of independent schools and public schools” (Hofmeyr, 2010).

P4^A: *You’re supposed to teach what is prescribed [in the curriculum] and you must follow it week by week ... there is some flexibility but there’s no time because the assessment needs to be completed based on what is in the content.*

P3^A: *There are too many topics and you just have to touch on something ... you need to go deeper, you need to have the time to go deeper into that.*

P4^A: *Here in our school, if you start talking about gangsterism, it’s going to take you two, three periods and maybe you have just ten minutes to focus on it.*

P^A: *It [the content] is not hitting specifically to [this context].*

Barnhardt (1981; 2006:12) concludes that a, “more flexible and adaptive curriculum design is needed” so that curriculum content can be applicable to a wider range of cultural conditions and allow for greater flexibility in the processes of instruction. This, he emphasises, will require the role of the teacher to change, “from that of transmitter of knowledge and skills, to that of organizer of learning activities”.

The question thus arises: How adaptable and flexible is the current curriculum, and how equipped/trained are the teachers in delivering it?

- **Adaptability and flexibility**

P1^A: *We can [adapt the content] to our learners because we know the circumstances and we know what’s happening out here; you see what [the learners] need and you try to give it to them ... you know your learners, what they need, and you try to give it at that moment.*

“The teachers typically better understand their students’ needs and how to conform the curriculum to the day-to-day realities of their particular school and classroom than does a designer” (Departments of Basic Education and Higher Education and Training, 2011d:471). This conforming of the curriculum is what has been referred to in this study as ‘adaptation’ or

‘modification’ (see section 2.3). “Teachers are not only justified in adapting curriculum to local constraints, but also in an ideal position to repurpose curriculum” because, as professionals, they better understand their students’ needs (Luehmann, 2001; McLaughlin, 1976 as cited in Squire et al., 2003:471).

A student-centered approach, although direct instruction is teacher controlled, is centred on the pupil. The teacher takes full responsibility whereby, despite different learning preconditions, “pupils acquire in an active form the most important syllabus contents with an in-depth understanding of the matter” (Döbert, 2000:48). However, without well-trained, qualified and committed teachers it is impossible to deliver effectively functioning educational systems (Moeini, 2008). On the other hand, without a more flexible curriculum design, no amount of training will assist in the effective delivery of curriculum content. This again emphasises the two emergent factors influencing curriculum implementation: flexibility in delivery (and thus teacher training), and curriculum content and design.

4.3.4 Role of the Life Orientation teacher

“Teachers don’t merely deliver the curriculum; they develop, define it and reinterpret it too” (Hargreaves, 1994, as cited in Renck Jalongo, 1991:47). This is a succinct description of the role of the educator – one which points to the great responsibility that lies in the hands of teachers in the provision of knowledge and skills. It is an active role, requiring flexibility and adaptability in order to achieve the intended purpose of satisfying the needs of the learner. However, “without an understanding of how culture, experience, readiness, and context influence how people grow, learn, and develop, it is difficult for teachers to make good judgements about how to deal with the specific events in the classroom” (Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000:525). Life Orientation teachers in particular need to possess the qualities of, “role models, counsellors and compassionate leaders”, as it is their role to lead and guide the youth of our country in developing the skills and values necessary for life and careers in the outside world, which includes making, “morally responsible decisions” (DoE, 2000: 6-7; 13).

4.3.4.1 Personality traits

According to the literature, as outlined in section 2.5.1, in order to successfully perform the role of a Life Orientation teacher, it is important that one possess the relevant personality

traits. A policy released in the Government Gazette (DoE, 2000) lists these traits as the following:

- Approachable
- A good listener
- Caring of learners and colleagues and shows empathy
- Trustworthy and able to keep confidentiality
- Sensitive to the community values
- Passionate about the fundamental values of our constitution
- Non-judgemental

These traits are similar to those provided by the respondents in their self-administered questionnaires. The table below represents their responses.

Table 4.6: Required personality traits of a Life Orientation teacher

Participant	Traits
P1 ^A	Confidence, discipline, and guidance.
P3 ^A	Compassionate, calm, and understanding.
P5 ^A	Charismatic, humble, approachable, caring, have a listening ear, and enthusiastic about life.
P1 ^B	Engaging, open, and non-judgemental.
P2 ^B	Approachable and open-minded.
P4 ^B	Passion for children.

A similarity in response was found not only with the literature, but also between contexts, suggesting that these traits may not to be bound by a specific context, but rather apply to Life Orientation teachers in general. This is important to consider when training and developing educators to deliver this subject, as the personality traits and role of the Life Orientation teacher appear to be generalised needs, across cultures and contexts in the Western Cape.

4.3.4.2 Skills and needs of the Life Orientation teacher

The skills of the teacher emerged as a dominant theme in the data analysis process. As discussed in section 2.5., Taylor and Vinjevold (1999:25) found that teachers were unprepared to teach learners, leaving all involved feeling frustrated and ill-equipped.

P^A: *They [LO teachers] are not equipped with those skills which are not taught at the university: to come into the area where there are all these social problems and then deal with it, because it's a culture shock for them.*

According to the seven roles of the educator, as stipulated in the Norms and Standards for Educators (DoE, 2000:6-7), one of the roles, that of *interpreter and designer of learning programmes and materials*, requires that the educator, “identify the requirements for a specific context of learning and select and prepare suitable textual and visual resources for learning”.

P3^B: *It's up to the teachers to make [the lesson] interesting.*

P5^B: *Either we sit there and we flog a dead horse for the next three years or we take it upon ourselves to actually bring it alive and ... make it interesting for us and interesting for [the learners].*

Teachers need to possess the qualities of, “role models, counsellors and compassionate leaders” (DoE, 2000: 6-7), and this is echoed by the experiences of the participants:

P1^B: *You have to be able to facilitate discussion and also because of self-disclosure sometimes after the lesson.*

P^A: *You dealing with emotions all the time, here you asking learners to think about issues*

that they're trying to suppress the whole day. You talking about sexuality, you talking about all those things, and those are things that are real to the learner ... and you talking about abuse.

P3^A: *The whole time while you're teaching you have to counsel as well.*

This can however lead to frustration if the educator feels unequipped or does not feel that training has been adequate. P5^B felt very strongly about this:

P5^B: *To give a regular untrained teacher the job of teaching LO at times I think is very challenging, and it can be very frustrating because you want to give them the best possible advice, because its real stuff and it has real implications; They [the department] are asking regular teachers to become counsellors, psychologists and therapists and all of the, you know, professionals around that area, because you're dealing with some hectic stuff. You ask us to be nurses and give advice on AIDS and teenage pregnancy, you asking us to be therapists ... what would actually tax an experienced professional, and you're now asking regular teachers to do.*

Another main role of the Life Orientation teacher is to teach physical education as a component of the LO subject. According to Van Deventer (2002 as cited in Rooth, 2005:109), studies have indicated that, “in South African schools, 95% of the teachers are not trained to teach physical education”.

P3^A: *I'm not a PT teacher, so I had to go and run around and make ... I mean, I couldn't give them what they need, the skills that they needed for all their PT that they need to do. So we'd just run around and make up games and stuff like that.*

P3^A's experience is supported by a study conducted by Alexander, et al., who found that the picture that emerges of physical education in South Africa is similar to that of guidance: “a marginalised subject, previously non-examinable, not offered by all schools and not taken seriously” (Alexander, 1998; Reddy et al., 2003; Van Deventer, 1999, 2002, 2004; Wentzel, 2001 as cited in Rooth, 2005:114).

P^B: *I like the fact that they've brought back physical education, because I think that that's been a huge hole in high schools for, I don't know how many years since that was done away with ... but still I don't think that it's enough – one period in a ten day cycle for us – I don't think it's enough, but it's more than a lot of kids were ever doing before, so I think that's important.*

As mentioned above, career guidance also forms an integral part of the Life Orientation subject and, although this can be a very positive aspect, again, there has been some frustration expressed by participants with regards to effective and appropriate training in this area:

P^B: *The job of the counsellor ... the guidance counsellors, they used to do all of that career guidance. It used to be their area specifically. But now a large part of that has come under the umbrella of the Life Orientation, which is fantastic, because it means that we can actually do more than we've done before.*

P1^B: *Maybe the only facet where I'm not equipped is the career guidance section ... I'm not familiar with the processes involved in that kind of education.*

The Norms and Standards policy describes a competent educator as a subject specialist, leader and manager, whose role, “has strategic importance for the intellectual, moral, and cultural preparation of our young people” (DoE, 2007a:4). This can feel rather overwhelming for an educator. As P5^B said:

P5^B: *You literally have to be a jack of all trades.*

Prinsloo (2007:168) believes that teachers should be equipped with appropriate skills to make the Life Orientation lesson dynamic and to involve the learners in the process; that they should possess the passion and desire to teach this subject; and that, “an official screening process take place in order to ensure that the right calibre of person is appointed in this position”. P^B, P1^B, and P1^A all share common experiences with regards to the appointment of Life Orientation teachers:

PB: *I'm absolutely amazed ... how many teachers across all areas are teaching Life*

Orientation ... and I assume that they're doing it almost like a fill-in, and I just ... it makes me worry a lot about the subject, because you know the reality is: if you're going to teach in high school, you've got to be a subject specialist. In order for the children to give any kind of credibility to the subject, they've got to ... they can't see it as something you just kind of pick up and fill in because you haven't got enough classes or whatever.

P1^B: *They [the other LO teachers] haven't really been that invested in the whole subject ... we've had business studies teachers or the poor visual arts teacher having to run with the Life Orientation curriculum ... obviously their primary focus is not Life Orientation.*

P1^A: *They [the learners] didn't care about the subject, it was just ... and also the teachers had the same kinda attitude towards it ... they were not serious about the subject.*

Because many Life Orientation teachers are appointed to this position as a 'fill-in', it begins to impact on the credibility of the subject as a whole:

P^B: *One of the shortcomings of Life Orientation as a subject is that it is just a fill-in, in many cases, and people who've got no ... often no desire to teach it are [laughs] having to.*

P2^A: *When we came here, we got our package. Life Orientation was part of our package.*

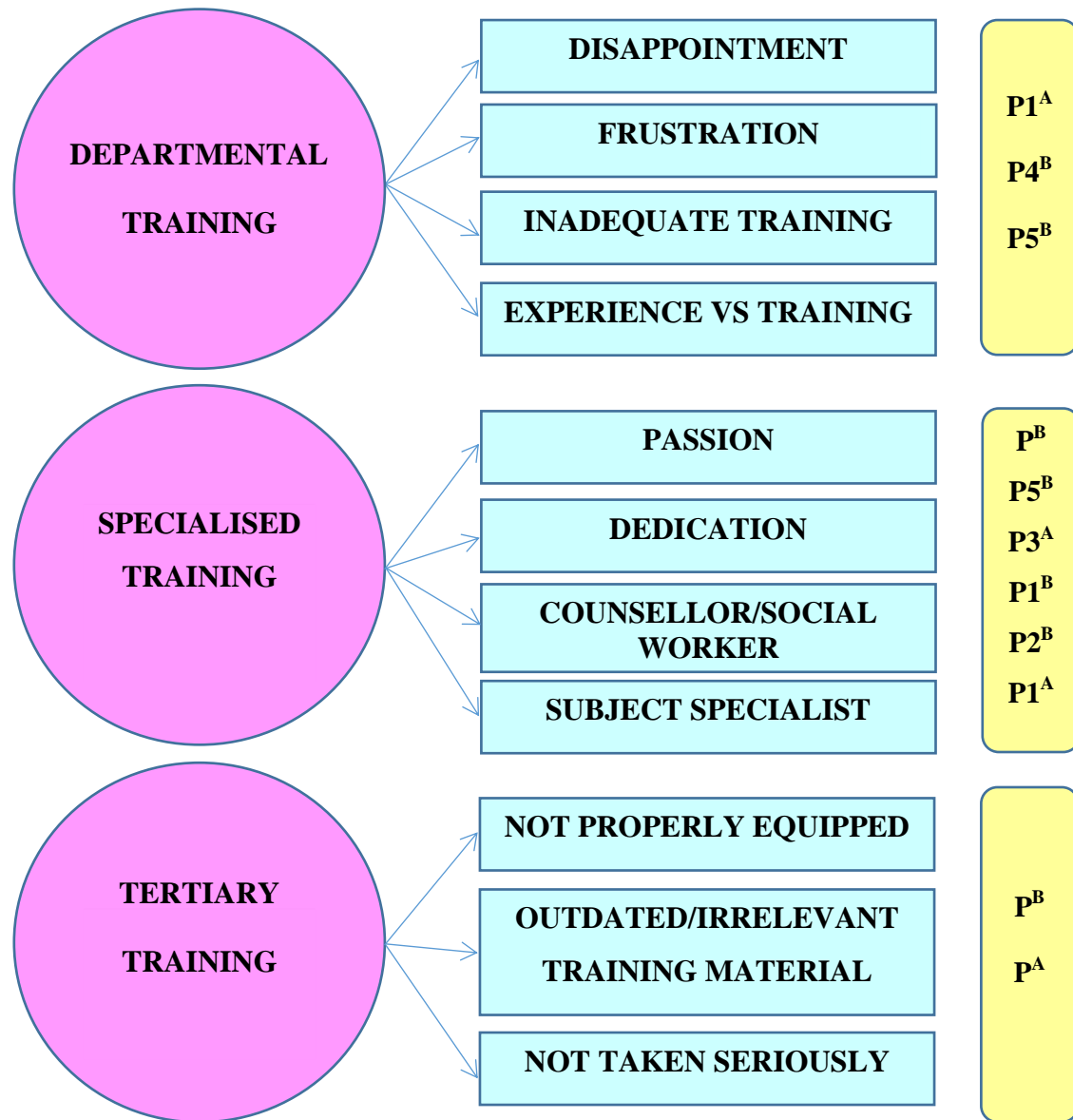
This has led to a number of studies focusing on the importance of subject specialisation and teacher competence. One such study is that of Döbert (2000:40), who found that, "the most important precondition for an improvement in the quality of lessons is teacher competence". This concept was discussed in detailed in section 2.3.

It is evident that teacher training is directly linked to teacher skill and competence, both of which appear to be lacking in the Life Orientation subject area, creating frustration amongst the educators.

4.3.4.3 Training

The figures below present a summary of the main themes (departmental, specialised and tertiary training) and categories that emerged with regard to the participants' experiences and perceptions of training for Life Orientation.

Figure 4.1: Participants' Experiences and Perceptions of Training: Themes and Subthemes



- **Departmental training**

As discussed in section 2.4.2, Prinsloo (2007) found that educators participating in her study felt disappointed in the department, as they did not feel acknowledged. They felt that the

Department of Education was not genuinely concerned about their problems. Koga and Hall (2011) found similar responses from their participants, who expressed doubts about the effectiveness of their departmental training. This was echoed by P1^B who expressed her opinions very strongly with regards to training.

P1^B: *I suppose the department would say that I have been trained in CAPS, but I feel the training to be inadequate ... I stopped going to a lot of the training because it was, it was bad. It was bad ... it's not dynamic ... it's dumbed down and its boring [laughs] and I don't feel that any of the programmes that they've introduced to me, any of the methodology has been exciting, dynamic, is worthy of engaging the students with.*

P5^B expressed similar views:

P5^B: *I don't even think we have even the basics, and unfortunately the only way to get the basics is through experience, so only after a few years you find a teacher becoming more comfortable, and how many kids have slipped through their fingers.*

P4^A, a principal in his previous school, described the experience of the Life Orientation teachers with regards to their CAPS training:

P4^A: *Some of them [the educators] found it [CAPS training] very frustrating because certain things were brought back that were there all the years, so bringing back certain things, bringing back certain teaching styles, but the frustration is also with the time allocated.*

These experiences emerged from both school contexts respectively, suggesting that departmental training is not context-specific. According to P1^B:

P1^B: *There's a dire need for dynamic, innovative training, there really is. And it doesn't matter whether someone's in a township school or a private school or ... we all actually ... we're not getting what we need to make this subject work. We are not, we're not at all. If I'm quite honest with you about career needs, I shy away from that module because I'm not trained well enough to do it.*

These experiences and perceptions are echoed by Moeini (2008:3) who found that traditional methods of professional development of teachers and instructors have come under severe attacks as, “inadequate, inappropriate and out of tune with current research about how teachers learn and how expertise is developed”.

- **Specialised training**

Prinsloo (2007:168) recommends that educators be, “equipped with appropriate skills to make the LO lesson dynamic and to involve the learners in the process”. She believes that professional development and training needs to take place in order for Life Orientation teachers to meet the needs of the learners. P^B, principal of context B, shared her experience with regards to professional training:

When I’m employing people and I’m interviewing them, I always say one of the most important things in this senior high school is that you’ve got to have a passion for your subject, and you’ve got to be a specialist, because that’s what the children respect.

Weeks and Erradu (2013:2) found that, “educators have been left to create and implement their own innovative means of accommodating the needs of learners ...” and Grant, Gardner, Kajee, Moodley and Somaroo (2010:402) conclude in their study that, “in order for educators to take on a leadership role (which entails innovation and creativity), they need to become experts, continually working to evaluate their own teaching”. P3^A (“I’m actually a qualified counsellor”), P1^B (“I am a social worker”), and P2^B (“my psychology background”), have all received training in psychology and counselling and all felt that this has been very beneficial in terms of their role as Life Orientation teachers:

P2^B: *I don’t think everyone is that comfortable to just come up with answers or give support, so I do think, I find it easier because of my [psychology] background, and I do think others would.*

P3^A: *When I’m just a Life Orientation teacher I’m not going to really know what is going on, what questions to ask the learner in the classroom, for instance, I will pick up as a counsellor, I will immediately pick up when something is maybe wrong with the child because of the skills that you’ve got, so you will immediately pick up when something is wrong and*

you will be able to try and treat the child before you even send them to the counsellor or therapist ... you will know exactly how to treat the learners in your classroom, according to their needs.

Although he has not received formal training, **P5^B** felt that being brought up in a people-centred home has helped him greatly in delivering the Life Orientation curriculum:

“My mom’s a therapist and a social worker and my sister’s in psychology and so I’ve grow up with that kind of open forum and communication, so it does come easier for me, so I enjoy that aspect of the class when kids do challenge me with questions and I really like that.”

P5^B and P1^A who have not received specialised training, and who are currently teaching in the private and public sector respectively, both expressed a need for some specialised teacher training:

P5^B: *As far as specialised training is concerned, I think it should be absolutely mandatory, and I think until that is the case, LO ... won’t be taken as seriously as it should.*

P1^A: *I think that’s essential for us ... and the Western Cape education department must actually start training for counsellors ... and not only school like this, I think all schools in the Western Cape.*

Their belief is shared by Moeini (2008:3), who found that, in order for educators to perform optimally and effectively, professional teacher development programmes are required: “By improving their skills and knowledge, teachers become better prepared to create the most effective curriculum and instructional design” and thus attending high quality professional development programmes is crucial to the future of teachers (Moeini, 2008).

- **Tertiary training**

In a study done by Kiggundu & Nayimuli, (2009:346), they found that the majority of student teachers (those in tertiary training), indicated that they had, “no intention of teaching after the

course”. During the year, some students maintained the same attitude while others felt that teaching was, “not such a bad thing after all”. P^A, principal of context A, questions the effectiveness of tertiary teacher training:

“Is the theoretical part good enough or should they do a year or two out here in their training so that they can actually acclimatise and not just walk in and fall flat on their back and they want to run when they fall into teaching full time?”

In their study, O’Neal, Ringler, and Rodriguez (2008:5) found that, “teacher education institutions ... have sent new teachers into the classroom with minimal information regarding patterns of language and social development”. This supports the opinion expressed by P^A, who believed that:

“Life Orientation teachers are equipped theoretically, they are equipped according to the universities they passed their course and everything, but they are not equipped, if I can put it this way, Life Orientation ... or Life Skills”.

O’Neal et al., (2008:9) recommend that the curriculum in teacher education be updated to reflect the needs of the student population. P^B believes that it is a luxury in schools to have specifically qualified Life Orientation teachers:

“I would love to be in a position to have two of those”.

4.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the results of this study were discussed, and integrated with findings related to relevant literature. In doing so, the results of the study can be situated within the wider realm of research in terms of the topic of enquiry. In chapter 5, the study is concluded with a summary of the results, and the formulation of recommendations based on these findings.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research was to provide data to answer the research questions introduced in section 1.3. This chapter presents and discusses the findings according to the themes that emerged from the data analysis. A summary of the first four chapters will first be provided, where after the research questions will be presented. All the findings will then be discussed in relation to the literature review in chapter 2. Limitations and strengths of the study will be provided, as well as recommendations for further research. The researcher's reflections and a brief conclusion will then finalise the chapter.

5.2 SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS 1, 2, 3 AND 4

This research study aimed to explore Life Orientation teachers' experiences of context in the delivery and implementation of the curriculum, which also informed the primary research question: *What are Life Orientation teachers' experiences of context in the implementation of the curriculum?*

The aim of chapter 1 was to inform the reader about the aims, research paradigm, design and methodology, ethical considerations, and key words used in this research study. Chapter 2 served as the literature backdrop and theoretical framework as the foundation upon which to evaluate the findings of the current research study. The literature review provided relevant information on the Life Orientation subject area, as well as contextual factors which have been found both locally and globally to have an impact on curriculum design and implementation. The reason for choosing a basic qualitative research design within the interpretive paradigm was explained in chapter 3. Chapter 3 also presented an explanation of the data-production techniques, which consisted of self-administered questionnaires, semi-structured individual interviews, and focus group interviews. The process of data analysis was fully described in this chapter and the relevant ethical considerations discussed. In chapter 4, a discussion of the findings was presented, derived by using the data production techniques explained in the previous chapter, to answer the research questions.

5.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

As explained in section 1.3 and section 3.1, the primary aim of this study is to explore Life Orientation teachers' experiences of context in the implementation of the curriculum. More specifically, answers were sought to the following secondary questions:

- What are Life Orientation (LO) teachers' perceptions with regards to the context of their learners?
- What are Life Orientation teachers' personal experiences with regards to the implementation of the LO curriculum in their specific contexts?
- What are Life Orientation teachers' opinions with regards to the implementation of the Life Orientation CAPS curriculum in their specific contexts?
- How do Life Orientation teachers perceive their roles in the teaching of the curriculum in the unique contexts of their learners?
- How do the experiences and opinions of Life Orientation teachers in different contexts compare?

5.4 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

Post-apartheid South Africa, "is a heterogeneous country, requiring that the educational curriculum and teachers be prepared to deliver and assess their diverse students" (Ball, 2000; Hemson, 2006 as cited in Chikovore et al., 2012:304). It is a country with immense opportunity, but also great diversity. There is diversity in culture, religion, values, race, and socio-economic status – to name but a few – and all of these factors, as discussed in chapter 2, ultimately have an impact on learning and skill development.

Life Orientation, or Life Skills as it is named in some educational settings, is the vehicle through which life skills is delivered – the skills, knowledge and values (SKAV) that are required for optimal functioning in the outside world – "equipping learners to engage on personal, psychological, neuro-cognitive, motor, physical, moral, spiritual, cultural, socio-economic and constitutional levels, to respond positively to the demands of the world, to assume responsibilities, and to make the most of life's opportunities" (DoE, 2003:9). As

South Africa is so diverse in socio-cultural context, “the curriculum content must be applicable to the solution of the problems affecting the society which uses it” (Chikumbu & Makamure, 2000:18).

It was thus important to explore the experiences and perceptions of Life Orientation teachers with regards to context in the implementation of the curriculum, with the intention of, if possible, providing recommendations for curriculum design and/or teacher training and curriculum adaptation in order to enhance learning and ensure the acquisition of context-specific life skills for the country’s diverse population of learners.

In accordance with the primary research question, factors such as social, cultural, technological, and socio-economic status emerged from the data, where participants emphasised quite strongly the impact that these have on their delivery of the Life Orientation curriculum. Teachers in context A, a lower socio-economic context, experience challenges with regards to infrastructure and resources, which impacts on their delivery and implementation of the curriculum; but ultimately they experience greater challenges with regards to curriculum content – they feel that their learners’ specific socio-cultural needs are not being adequately met. Teachers in context B also experience frustration, as their learners come from a different social and cultural background to those in context A, one with a higher socio-economic status, and thus require life skills to adapt to their particular environment – life skills which they do not feel are been adequately addressed by a very rigid and inflexible curriculum. These experiences tie in strongly with Barnhardt’s study, (1981; 2006:4) in which he concludes that, “a development of an integrated cultural perspective suitable to the student’s needs and circumstances are needed”, in order to address the issue of contextual or cultural implementation of the curriculum. He believes that, “curriculum development usually does not explicitly address the social context in which learning takes place”, nor does it consider the underlying cultural processes by which the content is acquired and utilised (Barnhardt, 1981; 2006:5). The frustration experienced by the teachers in both context A and B may thus be a result of curriculum implementation challenges due to contextual factors, and a lack of contextually relevant content. According to Chikovore et al. (2012:304), “the poor performance of learners in South Africa reflects the continued use of an instructional model that emphasizes school-based learning with abstract outcomes, and evaluates pupils on the basis of constructs and concepts that ignore what children know and learn outside the school environment”.

Teachers are generally aware of their learners' specific contextual needs, and thus experience frustration with being unable to provide them with the appropriate skills for life in the outside world. With regards to work, learners in context A require very specific skills as their opportunities and work values differ quite dramatically from those of the learners in context B. Socio-economic status is a large influencing factor in this regard, as is the social and cultural background from where the learners come. Teachers in context A are aware that their learners require entrepreneurial skills and basic work ethics in order to enter into the world of work, where they will either enter into a blue-collared work force, or start their own business. The majority of these learners will not receive tertiary education – mainly because they come from a school of skills (see section 1.6.1) and also because of the cultural value system of their context, which places more emphasis on earning a living than on acquiring specialised skills. Learners from context B, on the other hand, come from a context in which they have a wealth of opportunities, and their teachers are aware that these learners will either enter into their parents' business, start their own business, study for a few years, or take a gap year. This requires a different type of life and career preparation. According to Eisner (1985 as cited in Gultig, et al., 2008:120), "A school's mission is to locate social needs, or at least be sensitive to those needs, and to provide the kinds of programmes that are relevant for meeting the needs that have been identified". He goes on to explain that, "the role of the school is to maintain the status quo: if the society needs more engineers, doctors, physicists, or skilled blue collar workers, the school is regarded as the agency through which they will be provided" (Eisner, 1985 as cited in Gultig et al., 2008:121). The participants of this study do not feel that the needs of their learners are being adequately met by the school and the curriculum in terms of work preparation for their specific contexts.

A similarity in experience and perception within both contexts also emerged with regards to the teaching of morals and values as an essential life skill, and a missing component of the Life Orientation curriculum. This is supported by research, which has pointed to the general erosion of social values amongst South African adolescents, thus affecting their ability to live and work optimally in the outside world. "Readjustments in the curriculum are to be carried out so that education becomes a forceful tool for the cultivation of social and moral values" (Kundu, 2011:3-4). This again requires an exploration of curriculum design and development, as well as teacher training, which is supported by all of the respondents, who feel that Life Orientation teachers in particular require specialised training in order to adequately deliver

this subject. This training, they believe, should concentrate on counselling skills, as well as skills in creativity and innovation. This ties in with the statement released in the government gazette (DoE, 2000:6-7; 13): “Teachers need to possess the qualities of role models, counsellors and compassionate leaders, as it is their role to lead and guide the youth of our country in developing the skills and values necessary for life and careers in the outside world, which includes making morally responsible decisions”. Two of the participants mentioned feeling that Life Orientation teachers are required to be a ‘jack of all trades’. This can be overwhelming and frustrating if adequate training is not provided, and if the curriculum is seen as being too rigid and prescribed.

Adaptation or modification, as discussed in chapter 2 (section 2.3), and in accordance with the participants’ responses, seems to be an essential component of curriculum implementation. Hans Döbert (2000), who found that the most important precondition for an improvement in the quality of lessons is ‘teacher competence’, believes that by being socially competent, teachers will be able to “react appropriately to different pupils in different situations” (Döbert, 2000:48). Most teachers in both contexts are adapting the curriculum to some degree without being consciously aware of doing so, as they have realised that their learners’ needs are not being adequately met by the current curriculum, which they find to be too generalised and inflexible in its implementation. Many of the participants from both context A and B were happy with the broader themes set out by the curriculum, and are thus adapting and modifying the content to suit the cultural and social context of their learners, as much of it focuses on fundamental human life skills such as self-awareness, health, and personal development. Their main concern seemed to be focused on the rigidity and inflexibility of the curriculum, and the lack of time provided to delve deeper into certain topics that the teachers deemed relevant to their learners in their context. These responses are similar to Väyrynen’s (2003) findings in which he concludes that an *inflexible curriculum* is one factor stemming from curricula design and implementation which is affecting learning across contexts. A more flexible and adaptive curriculum design is thus needed so that “curriculum content can be applicable to a wider range of cultural conditions and allow for greater flexibility in the processes of instruction” (Barnhardt, 1981; 2006:8). This is therefore an issue that cannot be solved solely through teacher training, but rather through a revision of the structure and design of the national curriculum.

On the other hand, adaptation and modification of the curriculum to suit the learners' needs requires teachers to use their creativity and flexibility (Koga & Hall, 2004), skills which can only be achieved through having, "the time and opportunity for professional development" (Stenhouse, 1975, in Gultig, et al., 2008:71). Yet many of the participants, within both contexts, felt that this training and professional development has not been adequately provided. Departmental training is viewed as being 'dumbed down' and 'boring' (P1B), leaving the teachers feeling uninspired and ill-equipped to deliver the dynamic and essential subject that is Life Orientation. In addition, resources play a large role in the adaptation and implementation of the curriculum, as access to, and familiarity with, technology is an essential component of global functioning for today's learners, irrespective of context – "the pedagogical aim of teachers is becoming heavily influenced by efficiency, economics and the politics of the consumer" (Davis, 2007:36). Teachers in context A specifically seem to find this a challenge, as the socio-economic status of their context does not allow for access to relevant resources and equipment. These economic and technological factors, in addition to the social and cultural factors, seem to add to the challenges of curriculum implementation, as well as the lack of training and professional development of the educators, who feel unprepared to modify content within an inflexible and rigid curriculum. Interestingly, although teachers in context B do not share the same challenges with regards to resources and technology, their experiences with curriculum rigidity and content irrelevance, as well as teacher training and development, are similar to those of the participants in context A.

The question regarding teachers' experiences and perceptions of implementing the Life Orientation curriculum in their respective contexts is thus essentially two-fold: does the challenge lie in curriculum design and development, or does it lie in teacher training and content adaptation? With adequate training, teachers will be able to adapt content in order to make it more appropriate to their learners in their particular contexts, making use of creative and innovative methods of implementation. On the other hand, this creativity and innovation may be suppressed if the rigidity and inflexibility of the design and implementation of the national curriculum is not addressed. Further exploration into this topic may thus be necessary in order to determine the most optimal solution to curriculum delivery across contexts

5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Certain aspects of this research study could be regarded as limitations and should thus be explored in further research projects. This research represents two samples of Life Orientation teachers' experiences of context in their implementation of the curriculum, thus limiting the transferability of the findings to a more generalised population. Even though transferability is subject to the researcher wanting to use the information of this current research, it could also have been enhanced by using more than one sample from each context.

The focus here was on teachers' experiences, however, additional information gathered from learners with regards to *their* experiences of context and content delivery would have broadened the scope of the research and provided more comprehensive information. In addition, although the researcher was reflective and as objective as possible, another person involved in data gathering could have added to the trustworthiness and credibility of the research study.

Life Orientation, as discussed in chapter 2, is a compulsory subject throughout a learners' schooling career. For the purposes of this study, teachers of learners between the ages of 14 and 19 were identified as research participants, as adolescence has been deemed by researchers such as Erikson (1950;1959;1968 as cited in McLeod, 2008) as a fundamental stage in the development of self – particularly in preparing for life and work in the outside world. The acquisition of knowledge and skills in specific contexts is not, however, relevant only to this age group in this particular subject area. Thus, one could expand this research further by exploring the experiences of teachers and learners of various ages in the delivery and implementation of the CAPS curriculum, and the acquisition of various skills and knowledge, across contexts. One would have to then consider cognitive competence as a main influencing factor, particularly in the delivery and acquisition of information in subjects requiring higher-order thinking and processing.

5.6 STRENGTHS OF THE STUDY

The aim of this research was to explore Life Orientation curriculum implementation across contexts, in order to encourage further research into curriculum design and development, as well as to make recommendations for more appropriate teacher training and curriculum implementation. Although the relevant life skills intended for South African learners are

taught to them from an early age, across all contexts, the researcher was able to focus specifically on teachers working with adolescents, in a high socio-economic context and a low socio-economic context respectively – allowing for comparative information to emerge with regards to the delivery of life skills to the selected age group, and their preparation for life and work in the outside world.

As the researcher was the only person gathering data for this research study, she was able to gain first-hand experience. This provided an opportunity to derive significant information and conclusions with regards to the research questions posed at the start of the study. Furthermore, the self-administered questionnaires and focus group interviews provided an opportunity for the teachers to express their opinions and experiences of context in the implementation of the Life Orientation curriculum, in an ethically controlled environment (see ethical considerations in section 3.7), allowing them to remain true to themselves and their experiences.

Even though the possibility of limited transferability exists, the findings of this research study can provide insight into the phenomenon with the aim of further research or curriculum and training development in appropriately delivering and implementing Life Orientation across contexts. It is important to remember, as stated in section 3.5.2, that transferability is in the hands of the researcher wishing to use this research study. That researcher should determine whether the information provided by this research study is transferable.

5.7 FURTHER RESEARCH POSSIBILITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As mentioned in section 5.5 above, this study was possibly limited by the small sample size used in the research process. As a result, the researcher would recommend studying this research topic further by expanding the research population in order to gain deeper insight into teachers' experiences of context in the implementation of the Life Orientation curriculum.

In addition, research could be conducted with learners in different contexts, and their experiences explored, so that greater knowledge can be gained with respect to learners' needs and perceptions of the Life Orientation curriculum and its implementation.

Research could be conducted in the communities within each context, and perhaps the researcher could gain greater knowledge with regards to work opportunities and requirements in the different socio-economic, cultural, and social contexts.

With further research possibilities, training programmes as well as curriculum revision could take place in order to address the research questions in this study.

Based on the results and conclusion of this study, the researcher would recommend that both teacher training as well as curriculum design (with regards to more flexibility) be reviewed. It would be recommended that educators be trained in adapting and modifying content within the broad themes of the Life Orientation curriculum, allowing for greater in-depth focus on specific topics deemed relevant to the socio-cultural context of the learners. The teaching of morals and values for the 21st century youth should be integrated into the CAPS curriculum, and it is recommended that Life Orientation teachers be trained as counsellors, so that they are better equipped to deliver and implement the Life Orientation curriculum content. There needs to be a greater awareness and acknowledgement of this subject, and of the great relevance and importance that it has for today's youth. An opportunity for a D Ed study should be considered in order to address these recommendations, where the delivery of the LO curriculum across contexts in South African school institutions can be explored.

5.8 REFLECTION

I began this research journey feeling excited to explore a topic that has both personal and professional meaning to me. The idea of curricular contextual relevance has been of great personal interest for a number of years, particularly within the South African schooling system. With our country being made up of such a diverse society, it made me wonder how *one* curriculum (namely the current CAPS curriculum) is able to adequately and appropriately satisfy the needs of today's youth – particularly those needs required for life and work in the outside world. This then led me to explore the Life Orientation curriculum in particular, as it was ultimately developed in order to achieve just that: youth preparation for 21st century society. I was lucky enough to have been able to teach Life Orientation (also called Life Skills) in a socio-economically deprived environment and I was thus given the opportunity to deliver the CAPS curriculum in the classroom. This was both an equally interesting and frustrating experience – it was evident that much of the content stipulated in the Life

Orientation curriculum was not relevant to my learners. Their cultural and social context appeared quite specific in terms of life and work preparation needs and I found myself needing to be very flexible and creative in my delivery of the curriculum, modifying it to suit my learners' needs. I did this while remaining within the broader themes outlined by the Life Orientation CAPS curriculum. I experienced much frustration however, as I was bound by specific 'rules' when it came to teaching this subject, and often my creativity with the content was seen as inapplicable and not meeting the requirements of curriculum implementation and design. This led to my strong desire to explore other teachers' experiences within the context I had taught in, as well as those of teachers in private schooling institutions, catering to learners in a higher socio-economic environment, where social and cultural norms seemed to differ quite dramatically.

I did not, however, realise just how challenging – emotionally and intellectually – writing this dissertation would prove to be. My decision to conduct a basic qualitative research study was based on much research and reading, and it was ultimately deemed most appropriate in accordance with the aims of my research study. I wanted to explore Life Orientation teachers' experiences and perceptions with regards to context in their implementation of the curriculum and, after in-depth discussions with my supervisor, I decided that interviewing my participants would be the best way to achieve this. I needed to compare these experiences across contexts (i.e. public and private schools respectively) and thus began the first challenge of finding a minimum of five educators at two schools willing to participate in a focus group interview. Logistically, waiting for a response, and for all educators to be available at the same time, was a nightmare – it became a six week process of emailing back and forth and coordinating days and times. Once the interviews were secured, some of the educators did not arrive at each of the scheduled focus groups, and some did not complete their initial questionnaire in full. This made data gathering very difficult. In addition, my focus during this process was on ensuring that all data gathered was addressing my research questions, while at the same time, I needed to remain flexible in exploring additional topics that emerged during the interview/data collection process. Furthermore, because I myself had taught the subject, and because the research topic was one that was of great interest and importance to me, I had to constantly remain aware of my own subjectivity and bias in asking questions and receiving information. This process thus highlighted for me that the researcher is not an objective bystander – and this re-iterated my decision to make use of an

interpretivist paradigm, which recognises the role of the researcher as a subjective tool in the data collection process.

Once my data was collected, I began the tedious process of transcribing all of the recorded interviews, including those conducted with the principals and HODs of both schools. Then began the coding process, which felt extremely overwhelming at the start. This procedure requires focus and structure: colour coding and then identifying common themes and categories in the transcript, which are then tabulated into headings which are aimed at answering the proposed research questions. Although this was a hugely laborious process, it was also extremely exciting, particularly when the emerging themes began to reflect my research questions. It began to feel as if I was reaching the end-point of a very long and often lonely journey.

Overall, despite the frustrations and challenges, this was a hugely rewarding experience for me, particularly being given the opportunity to explore the subjective experiences and perceptions of Life Orientation educators – the people who are in the classroom every day, the people who are delivering the curriculum, the people who know the learners and their needs better than most. It is these teachers who need to be heard, so that change can take place, and so that our youth can live and work optimally in the outside world.

5.9 CONCLUSION

Although there are limitations to this study, the information gathered can be seen to contribute to the development of knowledge and, therefore, to our understanding of South African teachers' experiences and perceptions of the implementation of the Life Orientation curriculum, within their specific contexts. The findings of this study highlight the need for further research into this topic and the field. Whilst participants discussed their experiences and perceptions with regards to Life Orientation curriculum implementation in their context, there is a need to explore more deeply the idea of flexibility and modification in curriculum delivery (resulting in the need for professional teacher training), versus curriculum design and development, which would require direct changes to the design of the current curriculum. Both of these appear to affect implementation but it remains unclear which would provide a more immediate solution to Life Orientation teachers' frustrations and challenges within their specific contexts.

One thing is for certain, in the words of the late, great Nelson Mandela (1918-2013): *“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world”* (**Brainyquote.com**) – and thus it is our duty to ensure that our educators are properly armed to fulfil this arduous yet highly rewarding task, so that our youth can live and work optimally in the world, and create the change that they wish to see.

“The main hope of a nation lies in the proper education of its youth”

~Erasmus

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ADDENDUM A: LETTER GRANTING ETHICAL CLEARANCE FOR STUDY FROM STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY



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Approval Notice **Stipulated documents/requirements**

14-Aug-2014
WASSERMAN, Jessica Nicole

Proposal #: DESC/Wasserman/June2013/11

Title: LIFE ORIENTATION TEACHERS EXPERIENCE OF CONTEXT IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CURRICULUM

Dear Miss Jessica WASSERMAN,

Your **Stipulated documents/requirements** received on **14-Aug-2014**, was reviewed
Sincerely,

Clarissa Graham
REC Coordinator
Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities)

Investigator Responsibilities

Protection of Human Research Participants

Some of the general responsibilities investigators have when conducting research involving human participants are listed below:

1. Conducting the Research. You are responsible for making sure that the research is conducted according to the REC approved research protocol. You are also responsible for the actions of all your co-investigators and research staff involved with this research. You must also ensure that the research is conducted within the standards of your field of research.

2. Participant Enrollment. You may not recruit or enroll participants prior to the REC approval date or after the expiration date of REC approval. All recruitment materials for any form of media must be approved by the REC prior to their use. If you need to recruit more participants than was noted in your REC approval letter, you must submit an amendment requesting an increase in the number of participants.

3. Informed Consent. You are responsible for obtaining and documenting effective informed consent using **only** the REC-approved consent documents, and for ensuring that no human participants are involved in research prior to obtaining their informed consent. Please give all participants copies of the signed informed consent documents. Keep the originals in your secured research files for at least five (5) years.

4. Continuing Review. The REC must review and approve all REC-approved research proposals at intervals appropriate to the degree of risk but not less than once per year. There is **no grace period**. Prior to the date on which the REC approval of the research expires, **it is your responsibility to submit the continuing review report in a timely fashion to ensure a lapse in REC approval does not occur**. If REC approval of your research lapses, you must stop new participant enrollment, and contact the REC office immediately.

5. Amendments and Changes. If you wish to amend or change any aspect of your research (such as research design, interventions or procedures, number of participants, participant population, informed consent document, instruments, surveys or recruiting material), you must submit the amendment to the REC for review using the current Amendment Form. You **may not initiate** any amendments or changes to your research without first obtaining written REC review and approval. The **only exception** is when it is necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants and the REC should be immediately informed of this necessity.

6. Adverse or Unanticipated Events. Any serious adverse events, participant complaints, and all unanticipated problems that involve risks to participants or others, as well as any research related injuries, occurring at this institution or at other performance sites must be reported to Malene Fouch within **five (5) days** of discovery of the incident. You must also report any instances of serious or continuing problems, or non-compliance with the REC's requirements for protecting human research participants. The only exception to this policy is that the death of a research participant must be reported in accordance with the Stellenbosch University Research Ethics Committee Standard Operating Procedures. All reportable events should be submitted to the REC using the Serious Adverse Event Report Form.

7. Research Record Keeping. You must keep the following research related records, at a minimum, in a secure location for a minimum of five years: the REC approved research proposal and all amendments; all informed consent documents; recruiting materials; continuing review reports; adverse or unanticipated events; and all correspondence from the REC.

8. Provision of Counselling or emergency support. When a dedicated counsellor or psychologist provides support to a participant without prior REC review and approval, to the extent permitted by law, such activities will not be recognised as research nor the data used in support of research. Such cases should be indicated in the progress report or final report.

9. Final reports. When you have completed (no further participant enrollment, interactions, interventions or data analysis) or stopped work on your research, you must submit a Final Report to the REC.

10. On-Site Evaluations, Inspections, or Audits. If you are notified that your research will be reviewed or audited by the sponsor or any other external agency or any internal group, you must inform the REC immediately of the impending audit/evaluation.

**ADDENDUM B: LETTER OF PERMISSION FROM THE WESTERN
CAPE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT (WCED)**

Audrey.wyngaard@westerncape.gov.za

Tel: +27 021 467 9272

Fax: 0865902282

Private Bag x9114, Cape Town, 8000

wced.wcape.gov.za

REFERENCE: 20140813-34551

ENQUIRIES: Dr A T Wyngaard

Ms Jessica Wasserman



Dear Ms Jessica Wasserman

**RESEARCH PROPOSAL: A LIFE ORIENTATION TEACHER'S EXPERIENCE OF CONTEXT IN THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE CURRICULUM**

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **21 July 2014 till 30 September 2014**
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr A.T Wyngaard at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number?
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.

9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

The Director: Research Services
Western Cape Education Department
Private Bag X9114
CAPE TOWN
8000

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.

Signed: Dr Audrey T Wyngaard

Directorate: Research

DATE: 13 August 2014

**ADDENDUM C: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT STUDY FROM THE
PRINCIPALS OF THE PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SCHOOL
RESPECTIVELY, IN THE WESTERN CAPE**



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**STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY
LETTER OF CONSENT TO PRINCIPAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN A SCHOOL**

Life Orientation Teachers' Experience of Context in the Implementation of the Curriculum

I, Jessica Wasserman, M.Ed. student from the Department of Educational Psychology at Stellenbosch University hereby request permission to conduct research at your school. The Life Orientation teachers at your school will be asked to participate in this research study. The results of this research will contribute to the completion of a master's thesis.

- **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The aim of this qualitative study is to explore the personal experiences and opinions of the Life Orientation teachers with regards to the context of the school's learners, and the role that this plays in their implementation of the Life Orientation curriculum.

- **PROCEDURES**

Teachers, who volunteer to participate in this study, would be asked to do the following things:

Step 1: Sign a form of consent to participate in research

Once they have volunteered to participate in this study, they will have to sign a consent form.

Step 2: Questionnaire

Each teacher will be asked to complete a questionnaire anonymously and return it to the researcher at an agreed upon time. The questionnaires will ensure the anonymity of each respondent.

Step 3: Focus group

The researcher will conduct a focus group interview with the Life Orientation teachers at the school at a scheduled time (convenient for all participants) on the school premises. The focus group discussion will last approximately 50-60 minutes, where key topics that emerge from the questionnaires will be discussed and expanded upon in an open yet confidential forum.

Step 4: Individual interview

An individual interview will be conducted with the head of the Life Orientation teachers about key topics that emerge from the focus group discussion.

Step 5: Dissemination of data

Audio recordings of the focus group and individual interviews will be made to facilitate gathering of accurate and complete data. The researcher will be the only person to listen and transcribe the recordings. To confirm agreement on the data, the researcher will provide each participant with transcripts, via email or hard copy, of the events where the participant were directly involved. The participants will be invited to make any amendments necessary and to approve of the accuracy of the data before it will be used in the study.

- **POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

Although the nature of this topic will make it highly unlikely that any risks or discomforts will be experienced, please note that no one is under any obligation to answer any questions that may make them feel uncomfortable.

- **POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

There might not be a direct benefit to the school but, at an academic level, it can contribute to a deeper understanding of the role that context plays in the implementation of the Life Orientation curriculum.

On the practical side it may be useful in professional development programmes for teachers, empowering them to support diverse learners in the acquisition of life skills that are contextualised and relevant. Ultimately it can be to the advantage of learners who will ideally be empowered to take control of their own learning and to engage in life-long learning, making relevant contributions to their communities and to society as a whole.

This research can potentially encourage curriculum revision and adaptation, allowing for more contextualised and localised learning to take place across the various school contexts.

- **PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION**

Participation is voluntary, therefore no form of remuneration will be provided.

- **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with any participant or the school will remain confidential and be disclosed only with the school's or participant's permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of pseudonyms (fictitious names) that will be used instead of real names to respect confidentiality. The questionnaires will be completed anonymously.

The audio-recordings will be stored on the researcher's computer, which is password-protected.

The transcripts will be emailed to the participants or, if preferred, hard copies can be provided, to cross-check information and make amendments where necessary.

The findings will be reported in a master's thesis without any identifiable data about the participants or the school where the research takes place. The information will be erased from the researcher's computer once the thesis has been completed.

- **PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

The Life Orientation teachers can choose whether to participate in this study or not. Teachers who volunteer to take part in this study may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. Teachers may also refuse to answer any questions they do not want to answer, and still remain in the study. The researcher may withdraw any participant from the research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

- **IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS**

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact the researcher: Jessica Wasserman at [REDACTED]; or the supervisor of this study: Ms. C Louw at [REDACTED]

- **RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS**

Participants may withdraw their consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. They are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of their participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding the rights of the research subjects, contact Ms Maléne Fouché (mfouché@sun.ac.za) at the Division for Research Development.

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL

The information above was described to me by Jessica Wasserman in Afrikaans/English and I am in command of this language. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

I hereby consent completion of the proposed study at [REDACTED]. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Principal

Signature of Principal

Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to the school principal, [REDACTED]

J. Wasserman (Researcher)

Date

ADDENDUM D: INFORMED CONSENT FORM AS PROVIDED TO RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS (HOD'S AND TEACHERS)



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STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

LETTER OF CONSENT TO PARTICIPANTS

A Life Orientation Teacher's Experience of Context in the Implementation of the Curriculum

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Jessica Wasserman, M.Ed. student, from the Department of Educational Psychology at Stellenbosch University. The results of this research will be contributed to the completion of a master's thesis. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you meet the selection criteria for this study as you are a Life Orientation teacher at the school where this study will take place.

- **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The aim of this qualitative study is to explore the personal experiences and opinions of the Life Orientation teachers with regards to the context of the school's learners, and the role that this plays in their implementation of the Life Orientation curriculum.

- **PROCEDURES**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you would be asked to do the following things:

Step 1: Sign a form of consent to participate in research

Once you have volunteered to participate in this study, you be asked to sign a consent form.

Step 2: Questionnaire

You will be asked to complete a questionnaire anonymously and to return it to the researcher at an agreed upon time. The questionnaire will ensure the anonymity of each respondent.

Step 3: Focus Group

You will participate in one focus group discussion about the topic and key topics that emerge from the questionnaires will be discussed and expanded upon in an open yet confidential forum. Other Life Orientation teachers will also be part of the focus group discussion. The researcher will facilitate the discussion which will last approximately one hour. A venue and time will be arranged by the researcher to suit all participants.

Step 4: Individual interview

An individual interview will be conducted with the head of the Life Orientation teacher about key topics that emerge from the focus group discussion.

Step 5: Dissemination of data

Audio recordings of the focus group and individual interview will be made to facilitate gathering of accurate and complete data. The researcher will be the only person to listen and transcribe the recordings. To confirm agreement on the data, the researcher will provide each participant with transcripts, via email or hard copy, of the events where the participant were directly involved. The participants will be invited to make any amendments necessary and to approve of the accuracy of the data before it will be used in the study.

- **POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

Although the nature of this topic will make it highly unlikely that any risks or discomforts will be experienced, please note that no one is under any obligation to answer any questions that may make them feel uncomfortable.

- **POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

There might not be a direct benefit to the school but, at an academic level, it can contribute to a deeper understanding of the role that context plays in the implementation of the Life Orientation curriculum.

On the practical side it may be useful in professional development programmes for teachers, empowering them to support diverse learners in the acquisition of life skills that are contextualised and relevant. Ultimately it can be to the advantage of learners who will ideally be empowered to take control of their own learning and to engage in life-long learning, making relevant contributions to their communities and to society as a whole.

This research can potentially encourage curriculum revision and adaptation, allowing for more contextualised and localised learning to take place across the various school contexts.

- **PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION**

Participation is voluntary, therefore no form of remuneration will be provided.

- **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with any participant or the school will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with the school or your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of pseudonyms (fictitious names) that will be used instead of real names to respect confidentiality. The questionnaire will be completed anonymously.

The audio-recordings will be stored on the researcher's computer, which is password-protected.

The transcripts will be emailed to you or if preferred hard copies can be provided, to cross-check information and make amendments where necessary.

The findings will be reported in a master's thesis without any identifiable data about your or the school where the research takes place. The information will be erased from the researcher's computer once the thesis has been completed.

- **PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

You can choose whether to be involved in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if

circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

- **IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS**

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact the researcher: Jessica Wasserman at [REDACTED]; or the supervisor of this study: Ms. C Louw at [REDACTED]

- **RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS**

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding the rights of the research subjects, contact Ms Maléne Fouché (mfouche@sun.ac.za) at the Division for Research Development.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

The information above was described to me by Jessica Wasserman in Afrikaans/English and I am in command of this language. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

I hereby consent completion of the proposed study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____. The participant was encouraged and given ample time to ask any questions. This conversation was conducted in Afrikaans/English.

J. Wasserman (Researcher)

Date

ADDENDUM E: GENERAL INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW WITH PRINCIPALS



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PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

- 1 How long have you been acting as principal of your school?
- 2 What type of school contexts have you worked in previously?
- 3 How would you describe the context of your school?
- 4 How would you describe the context of the learners of your school?
- 5 How equipped do you feel the LO teachers are in working within this context?
- 6 What do you think the LO teachers require in order to feel equipped to work in this context?
- 7 What do you think the Life Orientation teachers in particular need to do in order to provide the learners in this context with the skills and values that are outlined in the curriculum?

- 8 What is your opinion with regards to the effectiveness of the current CAPS Life Orientation curriculum: do you feel that it is flexible and adaptable?

- 9 With respect to their context, what do you feel are the most relevant life skills for these learners? What skills and values do you believe will benefit them in their life and career in the outside world?

ADDENDUM F: GENERAL INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW WITH LIFE ORIENTATION HOD'S



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LIFE ORIENTATION H.O.D INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

- 1 How long have you been acting as H.O.D. of Life Orientation in your school?
- 2 What type of school contexts have you worked in previously?
- 3 How would you describe the context of the school you are currently working in?
- 4 How equipped do you feel the Life Orientation teachers are in working within this context?
- 5 What do you think the teachers require in order to feel equipped to work in this context?
- 6 What do you think the Life Orientation teachers need to do in order to provide the learners in this context with the skills and values that are outlined in the curriculum?
- 7 What is your opinion with regards to the effectiveness of the current CAPS Life Orientation curriculum: do you feel that it is flexible and adaptable?

- 8 With respect to their context, what do you feel are the most relevant life skills for these learners? What skills and values do you believe will benefit them in their life and career in the outside world?

**ADDENDUM G: GENERAL INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SEMI-
STRUCTURED FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW WITH LIFE
ORIENTATION TEACHERS**



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FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

- 1 How long have you been being teaching Life Orientation?
- 2 What are your experiences in implementing (LO) curriculum in different contexts? (I.e. public, private, or model C schools)?
- 3 What type of training have you received? Do you feel that you have received adequate training for your position as an LO teacher?
 - a. Do you feel equipped/prepared to teach in the context you are currently in?
- 4 Would you have liked to have received more training/more specialised training? If so, what type of training?
- 5 Do you participate in continuous professional development? If yes, what do you participate in (e.g. workshops, research, conferences)?
- 6 What are your personal values with regards to the LO curriculum and the teaching of

life skills?

- 7 Do you feel that your personal value system has an impact on your delivery of the LO curriculum?
- 8 How, if at all, does the latest CAPS curriculum differ from the previous NCS?
- 9 Which of these curricula, if any, do you believe was more effective (in the delivery of life skills) and why?
- 10 What type of skills do you think the current curriculum is providing these learners with?
- 11 Have you received training in the implementation of the new CAPS curriculum?
 - a. If so, do you feel that it was effective?
 - b. What was the duration of this training?
 - c. Where did you receive this training and by whom?
- 12 Does the curriculum allow for flexibility and adaptability of teaching approaches?
 - a. Do you adapt the curriculum/lessons to accommodate your learners?
 - b. If so, how?
 - c. Is this effective? Why?
- 13 How often is there a need for counselling skills?
 - a. Do you feel equipped to deal with such cases?

- 14 What do you believe is your role in the teaching of LO?
- 15 If I were to ask your pupils, how do you think they would describe you?
- a. Do you agree?
 - b. How would you describe yourself?
- 16 What type of personality traits do you think an LO educator should possess?
- a. How do you think one can go about developing these traits?
- 17 Does the LO curriculum fulfil the (life and career) needs of SA and children – the broader society's needs?

ADDENDUM H: SELF-ADMINISTERED (OPEN-ENDED STYLE) QUESTIONNAIRE



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SELF-ADMINISTERED QUESTIONNAIRE

A LIFE ORIENTATION TEACHER'S EXPERIENCE OF CONTEXT IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CURRICULUM

A RESEARCH STUDY CONDUCTED BY JESSICA WASSERMAN

QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire sets out to explore some of your experiences and personal opinions as a Life Orientation teacher with regards to teaching in your particular context, and how this may impact on your delivery of the curriculum in the classroom.

This questionnaire is anonymous, and thus your right to confidentiality and privacy will be maintained and respected by the researcher.

Please answer these questions as honestly and openly as possibly.

1 Age:

2 Gender:

3 Language:

4 Number of years teaching:

5 Number of years teaching Life Orientation (LO):

6 contexts/schools where you have taught previously:

7 Area where you live:

8 How would you describe the context of your school:

a Location of the school:

b Number of learners:

c Number of teachers:

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d Number of LO teachers:

e Number of grades in the school:

f Language of teaching in your school:

g Language(s) of learners in your school:

h Religion(s) of learners in your school:

i Culture(s) of learners in your school

j Socio-economic status of learners in your school:

9 What do you think are the needs of the society where your learners come from?

10 What do you think are the learners' needs with regards to Life Orientation and Life

Skills?

11 How equipped is your school in supporting you in the delivery of the Life Orientation curriculum in your context?

12 How adequate do you feel is the training that you have received for your position as Life Orientation teacher?

13 How adaptable and flexible do you feel the current CAPS curriculum is with regards to teaching approaches and delivery of content?

14 What do you believe is your role in the teaching of Life Orientation?

15 What type of personality traits do you feel an LO teacher should possess?

16 How, in your opinion, are the life and career needs of SA children being met through the teaching of Life Orientation at school?

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Your feedback and opinions are much appreciated.

1

P6

Herzlia HOD Interview

R: So you are the LO Head

P: I am

R: How long have you been in this position for?

P: I came to [this school] in 2006 when they basically introduced Life Orientation at FET level...so right from the start at this school

R: and you've been head of department since then?

P: I was the only person in the department when I came, because basically they were only running it at grade 10 level and then as it went along they introduced grade 11 and grade 12, so it started off only the grade 10's and then we took it up to 11 and 12

R: and when you took it up did you...

P...so for the first two years when we took it up to grade 11 I was the only teacher but then as we took it up to 12 then other teacher really tacked on..so they haven't really been that invested in the whole subject because for example the drama teacher or we've had business studies teachers or the poor visual arts teacher having to run with the life orientation curriculum.. and they've done a good job, but obviously their primary focus is not life orientation

R: and was life orientation always your primary...

P...Yes, I'm a social worker by profession, I'm not a teacher, but in all the other schools that I've worked at I've had to teach subjects in order to justify my counselling position, so..ya..is how I came to establishing the life orientation position

R: You mentioned working at other schools..

P...ok well before I came to [this school] I spent two years in joburg, so I worked at King David Linksfield [private school institution] but only in a counselling position for two years...and at Waverley Girls before I went to King David Linksfield..at Waverley Girls they had started to introduce life orientation at grade 8 and 9 level but I wasn't head because I was only started to familiarise myself with the whole process..and prior to that I had been the counsellor at Pinelands High School [Western Cape]. At Pinelands High School also we were starting to implement life orientation as a subject but I wasn't the head so..and we were still very much playing with life orientation as a subject..that was 2002/2003. And prior to that I was at the German school, I was only in a counselling position, and at Zonnebloem Nest for the first 5 or 6 years that I've basically been in this kind of role - I was the counsellor and I taught guidance and I taught social studies and all kinds of things..jack of all trades [smiles]...so I spent a good 15-20 years in a school context, I can't tell you exactly how many [laughs]..too many

R: and these contexts, were they all private schools, or....

P...they were very different contexts. So Zonnebloem Nest is in District six and is a school that was originally founded by Anglo American to be the first non-racial school, so its ethos was great umm but a very non-racial population..and then where was I after Zonnebloem..Pinelands uh Pinelands probably has one of the best demographic mixes, it's a public school in Pinelands in the Western Cape.. it very accurately reflects demographics of the western cape.. Uh Waverley Girls is also a government school..in its inception I think it was a predominantly white upper class jewish girls

refers to demo g info
history of LO in schools
teachers' background & attitude
skills and her ability and maybe her way of seeing LO (value of LO)

training interest

counselling skills

Other T's

despit backgr.

background + skills

skills

various roles training

experienced

race (context)
culture
private/public/government
area/location

socio-economic status

ADDENDUM J: EXAMPLE OF CODING TABLE: OUTLINING EMERGENT THEMES AND CATEGORIES

CODING TABLE

CATEGORY	THEME	CODE
Demographic info		Number of years teaching LO. Number of years teaching LO in this school. Number of years as HOD in this school. Number of years as principal in this school.
History of LO in school		
Teacher's background		Teacher's experience teaching in different schools/contexts? Context of teacher/area where he/she lives
Teacher's/HOD's/principal's experiences and perceptions	Experience of training: Departmental training Tertiary training Specialised training	Teacher frustration Disappointment/doubt in training Contextualised training Experience vs. training Educators rely on experience rather than training Subject specialist Need for specialised training: -Physical education training -Careers training

		<p>-LO teachers as counsellors</p> <p>Discipline problems as a result of poor departmental training</p> <p>Personal values</p> <p>Teacher's own judgement of LO</p> <p>Opinion of the curriculum and LO</p> <p>Teacher frustration??</p>
	Experience of LO and LO curriculum	<p>Experience of teaching in this context?</p> <p>Opinion of other teachers' experiences</p> <p>Disaffected learners as a result of the LO curriculum</p> <p>Certain LO topics applicable to certain race groups in South Africa. E.g.: HIV/AIDS only required to be taught to black learners.</p> <p>Discipline problems as a result of 'lame' material/content.</p>
	Perceptions of LO curriculum	<p>Increased levels (academically) of LO will lead to decreased discipline problems</p> <p>Democracy allows for more expression, which leads to a more opinionated and sometimes disrespectful youth</p> <p>Parental influence: decreases drug abuse</p> <p>Township/low socio-economic schools require teaching rather than facilitation in order to ensure learning acquisition of skills takes place</p> <p>Less discipline problems in more affluent areas as a result of more hands-</p>

	<p>Perceptions of context</p> <p>on parenting</p> <p>More severe discipline problems as a result of context/area (violence, gangsterism)</p> <p>Textbooks only applicable to rural children</p> <p>Lack of initiative and creativity in under-resourced schools</p> <p>Certain contexts determine level of receptivity</p> <p>Careers</p> <p>Sport</p> <p>Community service</p> <p>Health</p> <p>Abuse, rape, eating disorders, social awareness, respect for others/elders as well as diverse religions and sexual orientation. Tolerate, do not discriminate, violence, substance abuse, social media, self-esteem, teenage pregnancy, human trafficking.</p> <p>Value system, independence, communication, dealing with anger, hygiene, sexual safety, caring for others</p> <p>Contextual/environmental skills imparted by teacher according to</p>
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	<p>Experience/perception of learners' needs</p> <p>As determined by curriculum</p> <p>As determined by context</p> <p>As determined by developmental stage (adolescence)</p>	<p>learners' needs</p> <p>University entrance</p> <p>Marks-driven</p> <p>Careers driven</p> <p>Tertiary education and further education a priority.</p> <p>No interest in LO – does not further their tertiary education.</p>
Teacher skills/ability	<p>Required</p> <p>Personal (acquired)</p>	<p>Teaching degree/diploma</p> <p>Physical education skills?</p> <p>Career guidance skills?</p> <p>Counselling skills BUT time constraint</p> <p>Counselling skills</p> <p>Physical education skills</p> <p>Creativity</p> <p>Adaptability (to context)</p> <p>Passionate/dedicated teaching force</p> <p>Attitude</p> <p>Make lessons interesting – adaptability and implementation of content</p> <p>Teacher's sense of self-efficacy</p>

Context	<p>Cultural</p> <p>Socio-economic</p> <p>Educational</p> <p>Social</p>	<p>Parental involvement/influence</p> <p>Race</p> <p>Religion</p> <p>Disaffected learners</p> <p>Provide bursaries and subsidies, provide food, funding from community</p> <p>Varied economic spectrum – two extremes BUT similar social levels</p> <p>Transformed contexts: white upper middle class to township</p> <p>Facilities and resources</p> <p>Private schools and schools of skills more adaptable curricula?</p> <p>Infrastructure</p> <p>Resources</p> <p>Private(independent)/public/government institutions</p> <p>Irrelevant curricula?</p> <p>Inclusive education policy</p> <p>Academic ability of learners – barriers to learning</p> <p>Societal/community value systems</p> <p>Specific contextual issues in each community/context/area</p>

	Technological	Resources
	Political	International comparison: socialist vs. capitalist/democratic states
Curriculum	Content	Need for Practical curriculum
	Textbooks	Textbooks/content 'Too dumbed down' Not relevant to learners' lives/context (irrelevant)
	Design	Not addressing learner's developmental stage (transition) Designed for a massive spectrum (contextual)
	History/background	Textbook content 'basic common sense' Freedom to interpret curriculum Flexibility of curriculum
	Implementation	Private schools and schools of skills more adaptable curricula?
	Adaptation	Constructed and implemented own LO programme Adaptation of curriculum to learners' needs
	Disappointment/frustration	Need for experts/specialists → educators feel unequipped Different contexts, different learner

	Challenges	<p>needs</p> <p>Constantly changing curriculum</p> <p>And departmental ministry</p> <p>Poor management of curriculum by principals</p> <p>Poor implementation of constitutional policies into curriculum</p> <p>Corruption at government level</p> <p>Children underperforming</p> <p>Comparison with international systems</p>
	Curriculum	<p>“Too many topics”</p> <p>Too prescriptive</p> <p>Time limited:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not enough time on each topic -Not enough time to discuss issues/disclosures <p>Not enough time to engage in counselling with learners</p> <p>Too much content, not enough time for role-plays/practical application</p> <p>Not able to explore issues relating to context</p> <p>Does not allow educator to ‘go into depth’</p> <p>Changing curricula, changing systems</p> <p>Lacks practical skills</p>

		<p>Repeat of content over the grades – uninteresting</p> <p>Role of ‘therapist’ with no prior training</p> <p>Learners’ attitudes – lack of interest</p> <p>No link to further education/tertiary</p> <p>Unskilled in areas such as physical education and career guidance → feel unequipped</p> <p>Too broad</p> <p>Equipped theoretically, but not contextually</p> <p>Teacher’s context vs. learner’s context</p> <p>Curtail freedom to interpret, manipulate and manoeuvre</p> <p>Not able to go into depth</p> <p>Too rigid</p> <p>Not able to focus on contextual issues</p> <p>Not addressing learners’ developmental transition into adolescence – ‘childish approach’</p> <p>Lacks practical skills</p> <p>Repeat of content over the grades – uninteresting</p> <p>Different contexts, different learner needs</p> <p>Corruption</p> <p>‘Old school’</p> <p>Strict/rigid</p>
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	Department	
Role of LO educator	<p>Facilitator</p> <p>Empathy</p> <p>Non-judgementalism</p> <p>Identify and deal with disclosures/issues</p> <p>Role model</p> <p>Adaptability</p> <p>Creativity</p> <p>Aware of current generational issues</p> <p>Support</p> <p>“Jack of all trades”</p>	<p>Facilitate class discussion</p> <p>Learner self-disclosure??</p> <p>Focus teaching/content on learners’ needs/context</p> <p>Dealing with emotions</p> <p>Know ‘what’s new’</p> <p>Adaptability</p>